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# **THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM**



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"A study of the effect of Islam upon the psychology  
and civilization of the races which profess it."

By

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## NOTE

The references to verses of the Qur'an follow the numbering in the Ahmadiya edition, published at Lahore in 1920.

Dates are those of the Christian era, save where it is otherwise stated.



## INTRODUCTION

No form of religion is born in a day, or in a day degenerates. That is true of Islam. Pure and simple at first, it then grew proud and aggressive, and finally complex and static. The last of these three stages culminated towards the close of the third century after the Flight of Muhammad. Already the system had become fixed, the practice unalterable, the view of life a steady stare in one direction. Afterwards new sects and schisms, affecting the few, might arise, but never a revolution until the present age, when Islam, readier to break than to bend, is yielding to mightier forces. The religion remained stagnant because belief centred on the message and actions of a single human individual, so that his virtues and likewise his limitations have been perpetually reproduced in his followers. 'Their tokens are upon their faces'.<sup>1</sup> The pale wraith of the dead man's thought haunts them yet. A Persian proverb declares that a half-physician is a danger to life, a half-Mullah a danger to faith. The opiate which Muhammad mingled with his grains of truth spoiled the medicine he offered to sick souls.

The names 'Muslim' and 'Muhammadan' have become through common usage practically synonymous. But at the beginning the two were by no means the same. There was a time when a man might be a Muslim, that is, resigned to the Will of Allah, without acknowledging any allegiance to the Prophet. Before he appeared, the influence of the Jewish settlements in Arabia had done something in the direction of undermining idolatry. And the fact that the phrase *Allah ta 'ala* (God most High) had long been in use demonstrates the presence of the monotheistic idea.<sup>2</sup> Mecca, situated on the trade-route between Petra and Southern Arabia, was the focus and meeting-place of the various cross-currents of religion. That city presented a

most curious spectacle. It could boast a whole medley of cults. There still survived the Sabaeen star-worship which was flourishing in the time of Herodotus. The title Alilat, by which, as he states, the Arabs called Urania, may possibly be none other than *Allah ta 'ala*.<sup>3</sup> Next there was the ordinary idolatry, connected with stones in general, and particularly with the Black Stone. Christianity, too, had its rather unworthy representatives, but was losing ground. The Jews, on the other hand, by a stroke of worldly genius in unworldly affairs, had contrived a successful settlement with the idolaters. Abraham was made the patron saint of Mecca. He and Ishmael were alleged to have built the temple, and embodied in it the Sacred Cube. And the story of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael was fitted into the pagan ceremonies performed by the pilgrims.<sup>4</sup> In this manner a compromise was effected between Judaism and pagan rites. The pilgrim who kissed the Black Stone might be so acting as a sheer idolater, or he might be carrying on the tradition of Abraham. When he drank of the well of Zamzam, he could either regard the water as a charm, or else suppose that he was honouring Ishmael, for whom Gabriel had caused the waters to gush forth.<sup>5</sup>

Muhammad accepted the strange alliance of Jew and idolater, and thereby stamped himself as the Prophet of accommodation. If in after days his followers sought to retain a goodly portion of their animism and fetish worship as being compatible with faith in Allah, how could they be blamed? Did not Muhammad set for them the example? But at least in his earlier preaching he laid great stress on the Unity of God, and refrained from complicating or obscuring this truth by introducing himself into his creed. Muhammad, in fact, professed to be merely treading in the footsteps of Abraham. In a Meccan Sura occur the words: 'Verily Abraham was a leader in religion, obedient to Allah, upright (*hanifan*), not one of the polytheists (*mushrikin*)'.<sup>6</sup> The root *hanaf* signifies 'he had the feet turned inwards', whence came the idea of turning from idolatry to true religion. The title *mushrik* (*shark*, he

associated, *i.e.* other gods with Allah) had probably not yet acquired in the mind of Muhammad the connotation of 'Christian'.

Hence during the first period of Muhammad's mission Islam was true to itself. Apart from the perilous retention of heathen rites, the religious principle upon which it rested was simply the recognition of a Supreme and Only God. If the Prophet demanded 'resignation', where could he have found it better exemplified than in the Christian ranks? At one time he no doubt admitted to himself that such was the case. Even the Qur'an—with its hopelessly confused chronology—bears witness that in this stage Muhammad professed to be entirely friendly towards all monotheists and their sacred books. He promised the heavenly reward to 'whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and acts rightly', whether he were Jew, Christian, or Sabaeen.<sup>7</sup> He did not ask his followers to turn in prayer towards any other centre than Jerusalem of the Jews. He invited the Meccans to become Muslims, not to become Muhammadans.

Had Islam remained in this state of innocence, it might have been a '*praeparatio evangelica*', and its founder worthy to stand beside Amos. But soon the religion was seized by corruption. Islam became Muhammadanism. The same Prophet who thundered against the joining of other gods to Allah, now began to insist on submission to himself, and directed his own name to be coupled with that of Allah five times a day. The little band of religious enthusiasts became a military bodyguard for Muhammad. When they prayed, they were no longer to set their faces in the direction of Jerusalem, but, copying the backward glance of Lot's wife, to turn towards the temple of Mecca. The scriptures of the Jews and the Christians ceased to be reliable guides, and the 'people of the book' became akin to idolaters, to be hated and opposed evermore.

Why did Muhammad make this change? The answer must be sought partly in the Prophet's vanity, partly in the morbid workings of his mind. There is a great deal in the life and attitude of Muhammad which illuminates and

explains the mentality of his disciples. Men are what they contemplate. The Muhammadan inclines to become a Muhammad 'in petto'. Insensibly he takes on something of the peculiar character of his master.

The temptation which came to Christ came also to Muhammad. And the Meccan could not resist the prospect of securing a worldly kingdom. The vastness of the empire that was to be built up in his name lay hidden from his eyes. Yet at least he himself gave the initial impetus. He it was who decided that Islam should be no less a temporal power than a spiritual movement—a means to his private glory just as much as to the praise of Allah. The ambition of Muhammad shines out clearly in the pages of his book. Whether he is to be held responsible for everything between its two covers is a question which seems likely to continue undecided. The Khalif Omar may have contributed a considerable portion. It was at his instance that the scattered Verses of the Qur'an were collected, and his daughter Hafsa, a widow of the Prophet, furnished much of the material. Among the mass of traditions (*ahadith*) recorded by Al Bukhari occur several which suggest that Omar dominated Muhammad. One tradition says : 'Omar was often of a certain opinion, and the Qur'an was revealed accordingly'.<sup>8</sup> Another runs thus : 'Among the peoples who went before you there have been narrators of traditions, and if any such is to be found among my folk, it will surely be Omar son of Khattab'.<sup>9</sup> There is also a tradition which tells how the Prophet dreamed himself in paradise. He sees a palace, and asks to whom it belongs. He is informed that it is Omar's, and is on the point of stepping within, when he is restrained by the remembrance of Omar's jealousy. On hearing the dream, Omar exclaims : 'I, who would give my father and my mother for thy ransom, O apostle of Allah, how could I be jealous of thee ?'<sup>10</sup> If Omar helped to inspire the Qur'an during Muhammad's lifetime, he may well have added something at a later date. It is a suspicious circumstance that the collecting and editing of the Suras continued through all the ten years of Omar's Khalifat.

The problem of Muhammad's sincerity in respect of the revelations he received cannot easily be solved. It is hardly possible to accept the theory that the Prophet's own words are ascribed to Allah merely by way of a literary device or fiction. The Qur'an repeatedly shows Muhammad as nothing more than a channel for the message of Gabriel. Evidence of the traditions establishes the fact that each of the more important revelations was preceded by a kind of epileptic trance, which ended in complete exhaustion and a twitching of tongue and lips.<sup>11</sup> These came to be the recognised signs of his having received the celestial wisdom. Probably his sincerity was equal to that of a superior psychic medium. During the seizures Muhammad's subconscious mind doubtless became active. On recovering his normal senses, he would feel that he had been in possession of a power distinct from himself, and therefore divine. His dream-thought was naturally coloured by his conscious desires and the memories of recent events. That is perhaps the most favourable interpretation. The Prophet desired as much seclusion as he could obtain, and a verse of the Qur'an makes a request that his visitors will not stay too long, but eat their meal and depart.<sup>12</sup>

More serious is the tradition preserved by Al Bukhari which tells of the fate which overtook two of Muhammad's scribes. In the first part of his public career the Prophet employed Jews and Christians to do hack-work for him. No doubt they were the only kind of educated persons whom he could obtain. Nor shall we ever know precisely how much they contributed to the composition of the Qur'an. It is possible that in the case of the earlier Suras the scribes did for Muhammad what Fenton and Broome did for Pope's translation of the Iliad. One can imagine the secretary submitting a rough draft and the Prophet adding the final shape and polish. Or it may be that the actual process was the reverse of this. But two of the scribes, either through vanity or rashness, publicly announced that Muhammad's so-called revelation was a fiction, and that they were themselves

the authors. The Prophet caused the two men to be put to death. One of them was a Christian who had turned Muslim, and later again became Christian. The pious Al Bukhari remarks : 'God made this man die, and his body could not remain in a grave'.<sup>13</sup> It is full of significance that the two Suras which the secretary claimed as his own were the second and third—'The Cow' and 'The Family of Amran'—both of which contain admissions in favour of Judaism and Christianity, inconsistent with later parts of the Qur'an.

Once the prestige of Muhammad had been established as a carrier of special communications from Allah, the temptation to employ the method for the advancement of his own political ends must have assailed him with tremendous force. The obvious view is that he deliberately yielded to that temptation. Yet here again one has to remember the very intricate strands in his character. Success had at last arrived. To the Arab success is a sure sign of a cause blessed by Heaven. So Muhammad might be more than half convinced that Allah, having thus vouchsafed His general approval, would also identify Himself with all the plans and actions of His Prophet. To be at enmity with Muhammad, therefore, was like fighting against Allah. It was the attitude of the Israelites. But a prophet ought to have known better. Nor is it the part of a seer to acquiesce in the temper of his times, still less to assume a divine benediction for his every action and enterprise. The Musalman is perfectly certain that Allah is on his side, though he is hardly so much concerned to make sure that he himself is on the side of Allah. Such an attitude he has inherited from Muhammad. From the same source he has learnt to excuse a certain absence of scruple in his dealings with those who are not of his faith.

Muhammad and his book completely changed the face of Islam. The Muslim was now required to believe a great deal more. 'Come to what Allah has sent down, and to the Apostle !'<sup>14</sup> On the hypothesis that the Prophet was the veritable spokesman of Allah, it was necessary that his adherents should deem themselves bound by all the law

and custom which the Qur'an prescribed. 'To-day have I perfected for you your religion, and completed my favour upon you, and chosen for you Islam as your faith'. These words are immediately followed by a characteristic indulgence. 'But whoever is compelled by hunger to transgress, not wilfully inclining towards wrong, to him verily Allah is forgiving, merciful'.<sup>15</sup> It is not difficult to observe that the transgression refers to violation of the ritual. The Qur'an's failure to distinguish between outward observance and inward obedience has exercised untold influence on the Muhammadan world. The five Pillars of Religion are : the recital of the short creed concerning Allah and His Prophet, the five official daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramdan, the legal alms, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. Of these duties, prayer is the only one which might appear to be invested with any really spiritual significance. But the ablutions in preparation for prayer rank on a level with, or even above the prayer itself.<sup>16</sup> Unless the ablution is correctly performed, the rite is ruined. Moreover both Muhammad and Muhammadan, impressed with the idea that the Will of Allah is fixed and unalterable, reject the Christian view of prayer as a communing with God and a petitioning for spiritual and material benefits. To ask boons from Allah savours of presumption and impertinence. To attempt to deflect one's destiny is useless rebellion. Muslim prayer substantially consists in uttering statements of belief, including ejaculations about the lofty character of Allah. The formalism of the ablutions is reinforced by the stress laid on particular bodily attitudes to be adopted during the recital of the prayers. And the compulsory use of Arabic adds to the air of unreality. Religious emotion prefers to find an outlet in the mother-tongue. The magnificence which attends the unknown has not always a wholesome effect. For this, however, the Prophet cannot be held responsible, presuming that every believer would understand the language of the Arab.

The abrupt and disjointed character of the Qur'an led Charles Kingsley to describe it as an irregular collection

of Muhammad's meditations and notes for sermons. Yet the book professes to explain everything.<sup>17</sup> It claims to be a complete guide for daily life. If the creed of Muhammad had never travelled beyond Bedouin nomads, the Qur'an might have fulfilled its function. But it was soon found to be inadequate. Muslims wanted an entire domestic and social system, which should have for its basis the words and practice of the Prophet. Hence began the third stage in Islam's history. Every precept had somehow to be traced back to Muhammad. Life was to be lived as he would have wished, and exactly as he lived it, saving always a few excesses, pardonable in the Prophet, but not to be treated as precedents for ordinary men. Hence the term *Sunna* (custom) assumed a fresh meaning. Until Muhammad's day it had denoted the usual practice of the Arabian forefathers. Thenceforth it was used in a technical sense, as equivalent to the practice of the Prophet. The Qur'an and the *Sunna* are equally binding authorities. The *Sunna*, therefore, cannot be deemed a mere appendix or supplement to the Qur'an. Muhammad is reported as saying: 'He who loves not my *Sunna* is not my follower'.<sup>18</sup>

*Sunna* is founded upon tradition, or *hadith* (from the root *hadath*, 'it happened'). When the great search for sayings of Muhammad commenced, the sword of Islam had already carried the faith far beyond Arabia. Each country was ransacked for traces, however faint, of the Prophet's casual utterances. Every tradition had its pedigree, and a special label which varied according to the strength or weakness of the chain of evidence. To-day the classification of the traditions is a matter of small importance. Those which were considered tolerably genuine were taken up into the *Sunna*. But considered as indications of Muhammadan mentality, all the traditions possess significance. As Professor Guillaume remarks: 'However sceptical we are with regard to the ultimate historical value of the traditions, it is hard to overrate their importance in the formation of the life of the Islamic races throughout the centuries'.<sup>19</sup> Even where the language and the sentiment are clearly not those of Muhammad, it is he



who inspired the state of mind which produced the tradition. No sect professes to take the Qur'an for its sole guide. In common speech Muslims make no difference between traditions and the Qur'an. The traditions are both a cause and a symptom. They show one set of Muslim minds at work, and they mould another set.

The same thing may be said of the Sunna. An English defender of Islam once maintained that the Sunna is a parasitical growth, which has fastened itself upon the Qur'an. 'We know', he says, 'from history what the outgrowth and superstructure have been, and we read in the Qur'an how narrow the foundation was.'<sup>20</sup> Now it is true that in some respects, notably in its dealing with the person of Muhammad, tradition far outran the claims of the Qur'an. But the great mass of *hadith*, especially in the realm of law and common behaviour, must be pronounced as being in harmony with the Qur'an, or even as natural deductions from its teaching. Muhammad cannot be acquitted of responsibility for the whole method and system. It is pertinent to enquire why Islam has a Sunna, and Christianity has none. There can be but a single answer. Islam is in its very essence a religion of external form and ceremony. Christ's religion is inward and spiritual.

Thus at length it was acknowledged that the Qur'an and the Sunna were the foundation of Islam. To these were added the principle of agreement (*ijma'*) and analogy (*qiyas*). The two last were intended to provide the means of further development and expansion. But, as will be shewn in the chapter on Muhammadan Law, they failed in their object. Nothing could prevail against the inflexible Sunna. Among the pre-Islamic Arabs custom was the main criterion of morality. After the Muhammadan Sunna was formed, the Muslim asked not whether a thing were right or wrong, but whether it accorded with the traditional usage of the Prophet. Whenever anyone proposed to alter or improve the Sunna, he would be forthwith accused of the offence of *bid'a*—a term denoting both innovation and heresy. The few modifications of the Sunna

which have been reluctantly approved by authority in recent years have scarcely affected its supremacy.<sup>21</sup> •

The Shi'ahs, equally with those who style themselves orthodox, revere the Sunna. Only, in deciding what the Sunna is, they reject the evidence of the Companions (*ashab*) of the Prophet, and have recourse to traditions derived from members of his family. In the art of forging traditions they have exhibited as much ingenuity as the Sunnis.<sup>22</sup>

To the Pillars of Religion the Shi'ahs have added belief in the existence and power of the Hidden Imam. Goldziher has pointed out that this cardinal doctrine of the Shi'ah creed is of Arab, not Persian, origin.<sup>23</sup> But one may assume that the theory would never have obtained such popularity if the seed had not fallen on ground already prepared. Persians had always clamoured for Incarnations of Deity. The doctrine of the Imamatus represents an effort to correct the Qur'an's picture of Allah, by laying emphasis on His continuous connexion with human affairs. Yet beyond making the Shi'ah less careful about Muslim prayer and ritual, this belief does not appear to exert much influence on his conduct. The intervention attributed to the Hidden Imam is capricious and spasmodic. The Shi'ahs are still obsessed by Muhammad's account of Allah as the unfeeling Despot in the sky.

In estimating the results of the fundamental ideas of Islam the best method is perhaps to adduce examples of its working in various Muhammadan lands, and upon different phases of human activity. Each country, each race, has its own version of Islam. This can be seen most plainly with reference to Persia, but is true in a lesser degree of other regions also. Statements which hold good of the Moors in Spain may have no application to Ottomans in Asia Minor. So, too, with the individual. If the effect of Islam should be judged from the character of a Saladin or a Shah 'Abbas, the verdict would be unduly favourable. It were equally unfair to treat as typical Muslims such men as Timur the Lame, or even Mahmud of Ghazni, to whom the owls wished long life because he left so many

villages in ruins. Aurangzib was too much the Musalman, Akbar too little. The Egyptian Hakim was too mad, Firuz Shah of Delhi too sane. Yet amid all the diversity of types it is not difficult to detect a likeness. Adherence to Islam sets a definite mark upon a man. It gives to him certain habits of thought, a special demeanour, a disposition tending towards peculiar virtues and peculiar faults.

Whoever has been entrusted with the duty of administering justice among Muhammadans must often have felt, after the hearing of the evidence was concluded, that he could write equally plausible judgments in favour of both parties. He has but to emphasize a few bits of the evidence, and to gloss over other bits, to suggest that the credit of some witnesses is impeached by their admissions, or that others have merely stumbled in stating the truth. Sometimes the judge may do best to rely on his judicial instinct, and arrive first at the conclusion, and afterwards at his reasons. Western writers on Islam are inclined to join one of two camps, and to be somewhat unduly lavish both of praise and blame. It will often be found that the European who extols the religion of the Prophet is also hostile to organized Christianity. For example, one author declares Islam 'essentially a spiritual religion', because, as instituted by Muhammad, it had neither priest nor sacrifice, and because the mosques contain no pictures or images. Or, again, it is contended that the unprogressiveness of Muslim ideas has no connexion with the religion. If this be so, the usual conjunction of Islam with the absence of political vitality must be counted an extraordinary coincidence. Favourite topics likewise include the degeneracy of the Copts and Abyssinian Christians, the ferocity of Christian religious wars in comparison with those of Muslims, and the absolute sincerity of Muhammad.<sup>24</sup> Much is made of the Inquisition, Bolshevism, drink and divorce, with the tacit assumption that such things are caused by Christianity, and that every point scored against that religion should be placed to the credit of Islam.<sup>25</sup>

Other writers, on the contrary, have hardly been able to discover anything good in Islam or its influence. 'At most they are prepared to admit, in the tone of patronage, that many Muslims are better than their creed—a feat which might seem impossible.'<sup>26</sup> This school finds ready to hand a wealth of material so immense as to constitute an embarrassment of riches.<sup>27</sup> Hence it is apt to take the same view of Islam that Heine took of Judaism, which he described as not so much a religion as a misfortune. But to indict a religion is perhaps even more impossible than to indict a nation. In examining the effects of a religion, general statements, however inevitable, are particularly precarious, and commonly subject to large exceptions. There are certain facts which a Christian in his approach to Islam cannot forget. At the back of his mind will lurk memories of the Crusades, of a vanished Church in North Africa, of a Saviour reviled in San Sophia, or the faded Byzantine splendour. He will be haunted by the thought that Islam has proved so grim a barrier to the spread of his own faith. Gazing on the grandest mosque, he sees it overlaid with melancholy, a temple dedicated to error. Therefore he must be ever on guard against his own preconceptions. He need not, on that account, be disloyal to the standard of criticism which Christianity demands.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY MUSLIM RULE

THE political theories and systems of a people must to a large extent reflect the colour of its religious beliefs. A creed is a theory about God, and about His relation to men. And in the long run the creed prescribes or suggests that man, in his treatment of his neighbour, and in the whole art of living together, should imitate God. Each religion is bound to set before its followers some kind of political ideal. Zeus, to the ancient Greeks, ranked only as 'primus inter pares' and the Homeric deities are not above resort to tricks of cunning for the purpose of supplanting each other. This may help to account for the Greek fondness for a republican form of government, and equally the admiration for the successful 'tyrant', who snatched the reins of power by means of fraud or force. The Roman mind, prosaic and practical, was less influenced by religion. It inclined to despair of the gods, just as Cicero despaired of the State.

Similarly, the Muslim polity is a faithful reflection of the Muslim conception of Allah's rule. No doubt it may be argued that Oriental, or rather Semitic, ideas of irresponsible kingship contributed to the picture of Allah. An absolute earthly sway would suggest a heavenly counterpart. But if we regard the conditions prevailing in pre-Islamic Arabia, we find a considerable democratic element. The Arab chief has never been an absolute monarch. Custom limits his power in many directions. He must consult as well as command. Jealous eyes are upon him, lest he overstep the bounds of tribal usage and etiquette. Thus Muhammad cannot be said to have moulded Allah on any potentate in Arabia. Travel and tradition might

teach him something of the power of the Caesars ; and clearly he was impressed with the figure, already half mythical, of Alexander of Macedon. A cynic could suggest that Muhammad wanted power for his own purposes, and that by showing forth and emphasizing the inscrutable might of God, he judged himself the more likely to win subservience to God's representative and messenger.

But from whatever source Muhammad's doctrine of Allah proceeded, its profound influence on the world of Islam can scarcely be questioned. Islam, equally with the Roman Church, is quite as much a political system as a religious creed. It upholds the divine right of kings. Resigned to the will of God, the true Muslim must be no less resigned to the caprice of his rulers and governors. Although enjoined in the Qur'an to fight strenuously against the infidel, yet when he finds himself the subject of a non-Muslim monarch, he is advised to acquiesce—even to practise loyal obedience. 'The powers that be are ordained by God', however unaccountable they may appear. No doubt the Muslim under foreign domination comforts himself with the thought that he is essentially and before all things a subject of the Khalif.

The distinction between things political and things spiritual, which to the Western mind seems alike obvious and vital, is alien to Islam. Muhammad, having founded a Church, went on to found a State. Somewhat in the manner of Moses, he governed as God's vicegerent. Nor would it have occurred to any of his contemporaries to question whether a particular command was issued by him as head of the Church, or as ruler of the State. His every action ranked as religious ; or at least it received a religious colouring in the pages of his book. Always he is both prophet and warrior-king. Whatever interferes in the advance of Muhammad to political power is found fighting against God. Thus in describing the battle of Badr, the Qur'an declares that a thousand angels aided Muhammad's army ; whereas their enemies, the Quraish, victims of a heaven-sent delusion, saw twice as many Muslims as those who were actually in the field.<sup>1</sup> 'And ye slew them not,

but Allah slew them. And thou didst not aim when thou didst aim, but Allah aimed'.<sup>2</sup> Such language recalls the paean-song of Deborah, or the singing of a Psalm by Cromwell and his men after the victory at Dunbar.

This theocratic ideal was faithfully pursued by the earlier Khalifs, and it never entirely faded from the outlook of their successors. The Khalif was chosen by popular vote, the electors originally being the chief men of the capital city. Some form of election continued to be maintained. Thus the Turkish Sultans were regularly chosen as Khalifs by the 'Ulama of Constantinople. The Khalifat, therefore, has the air of a democratic institution. But the Khalif, once installed, possessed supreme authority in the State, and practically the spiritual sovereignty likewise. The Emperor became the Pope. Instance after instance occurs in which the Khalif claims to decide precisely what his subjects must believe, and how they must worship. Thus the Khalif Ma'mun tried by means of persecution to enforce the Mu'tazilite doctrine. In the tenth century 'Ubedullah, the first Fatimid Khalif, suppressed the night prayer during Ramdan, and made the muezzin sing: 'Muhammad and 'Ali are the best of created beings'.<sup>3</sup> Two centuries later we find the Khalif Mustanjid ordering that the famous Encyclopaedia of the Ikhwan-us-Safa should be burnt.<sup>4</sup>

This dual capacity of the Khalif has saved the Sunni from being torn between two loyalties, two clashing claims within the soul. The Khalif prescribed what was heresy, and what was not, and to be a heretic was to be a rebel. Politics, as in modern Ireland, stood merely for a particular phase of religion. The Friday sermon has always been the recognized and chosen vehicle for the conveyance of what in the West would be termed political propaganda.

The fusion of politics with religion, it can hardly be doubted, has not conduced to the welfare of Muhammadan peoples. So long as Islam remained the domestic affair of Arabs in Arabia, the idea of a Church-State worked well enough, and provided a wholesome corrective to the narrowness of tribal jealousies. But when Islam became

an Empire, the same system had the effect of stifling all patriotism. The national spirit is essentially abhorrent to Muslim theory. To Muhammad, and still more to his successors, the ties of race, language, art and literature, counted for next to nothing. The religious bond transcended every other. The whole body of Musalmans were supposed to be brethren, even if at times the affection between them tended to become, in Aristotle's phrase, 'a watery friendship'. A Muhammadan living in Egypt was before all else a Muhammadan, and only 'per accidens' an Egyptian. He had little feeling for the land of his birth. If soil signified anything, the virtue was confined to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. He had his sacred language, his sacred book, his ritual, his law, and a complete set of rules for daily life. What further should he want? Whatever the men of his country had thought or done before the time of the Prophet belonged merely to 'the Ignorance'.

In fact, Islam itself, until recently, may be said to have constituted a nation. The Pan-Islamic ideal was there from the beginning; it did not originate in the nineteenth century. Sultan 'Abdul Hamid did but attempt to revive an old view. Among the *hadith* attributed to Muhammad is the following: 'Whoso obeys me obeys God. Likewise whoso disobeys me disobeys God. Whoso obeys an Amir obeys me, and whoso disobeys an Amir disobeys me. Verily an Imam is a shield behind which one fights and is protected'. Again, 'He who divides the Muslim community a hand's breadth shall die the death of a pagan'.<sup>5</sup>

The strong corporate sentiment of Islam may be likened to the vague but real sense of unity which marked medieval Christendom, and which made possible the Holy Roman Empire and the Crusades, confirming the proud claim of Claudian, 'cuncti gens una sumus'. Yet, in the long run the instinct for nationality will out. The common bond of a creed may suffice in its first flush to unite different and distant peoples into one State. But the shin is farther off than the knee. Human nature is so consti-



tuted that it demands something near and plain upon which to fasten its loyalty. Men are born to be citizens, not only of heaven, but of some definite piece of the earth. Islam ignored this need. Christianity, on the contrary, disclaiming to be a political system, and acquiescing in obedience to 'de facto' authority, concentrates its efforts on the heart and mind of the individual citizen. It does not, like Plato, exaggerate the importance of the State; nor, like Islam, does it rob the State of significance. Rather, by an immense emphasis on the art of living together, Christianity makes itself a grand political force.

Still, it is true that almost any form of polity may be tolerable in actual practice. 'Whate'er is best administered is best'. But the Arab is imperfectly endowed with the natural faculty for government. Islam did not enable him to shake off the trammels of his native clannishness, or to realize adequately the responsibility of empire. To rule alien peoples demands imagination, invention, compromise. The rulers must be prepared to adapt their policy to special requirements, to admit and repair their mistakes, to be constantly launching fresh experiments. The tone of the Qur'an is scarcely calculated to make sympathetic colonisers. 'Muhammad is the Apostle of God. And they who are with Him are violent against the unbelievers, and merciful among themselves'.<sup>6</sup> 'They were crafty, and Allah was crafty, and Allah is the best of the crafty ones'.<sup>7</sup> Although the book includes not a few 'obiter dicta' directed against oppression, it failed to inspire the Arabs with an ideal of large-hearted justice.

No doubt the Arabs produced several excellent rulers. The Khalif Omar, in his generous and tactful treatment of the unruly Arab tribes, and in the balanced sobriety of his judgment, showed himself a genuine statesman. Mu'awiya and 'Abdul Malik, among the Umayyads, were capable and energetic Khalifs. And the reign of Ma'mun shed lustre upon the House of 'Abbas. Several of the Cordovan Khalifs achieved real greatness. 'Abdur Rahman III is described by Dozy as 'a pattern ruler of modern times, rather than a medieval Khalif'.<sup>8</sup>

But from an imperial race is demanded something more than occasional brilliant monarchs. The efficient superintendence of an empire requires a class from which can be drawn a body of administrators, fitted by character and training to become the steel frame of government—men who can face exile and a life of monotonous routine. That involves some measure of self-sacrifice. No class of such a kind was evolved by Islam among the Arabs. No 'cursus honorum' lay open to their budding proconsuls. Almost from the start they showed a tendency to employ foreigners in the less exalted posts. And these outsiders, gaining indirectly more and more power, continued their own advancement on lines similar to those pursued, about the same period, by the Mayors of the Palace at the Merovingian court. Ere the Umayyad dynasty ended, signs were not wanting which showed the Arabs were growing tired of empire, and losing confidence in themselves and their mission.

One party, indeed, among the adherents of the Sunna, showed itself opposed to the whole scheme of secular dominion. The Kharijites, whose title denotes 'Standers aloof', went back to the earliest ideals of Muhammad, and sought to confine his kingdom to the spiritual world. The rule of the Umayyads they denounced as impious and illegal. Khalifs were not necessary, they said, to the true believers, but only for the task of curbing Muslims who erred.<sup>9</sup> The Kharijites preached equality and brotherhood. If there must needs be a Khalif, he should be the worthiest of Muslims, chosen from any tribe, not necessarily the Quraish. Even a negro slave might hold the office.<sup>10</sup> The Kharijites could not abide the aristocratic pretensions of the Umayyad house.

But in Islam, even more than in Christendom, heresy is the mother of violence. These pietists, not content to continue dreaming their Utopian dreams, resolved to enforce their views with the sword, a course of action which scarcely harmonized with their theories. The history of the Kharijite sect illustrates the Muslim tendency to confuse religion with politics. But where Church and

State are one, the orthodox alone are counted loyal. Kharijite notions about the Khalifat have persisted to the present time in the African sect of the 'Ibadis.

A more thoroughgoing, if less ingenuous challenge to the Khalifat issued from the Shu'ubiya movement. For a century after the death of the Prophet, it could hardly have occurred to any Muslim to question the privilege of the Arabs. The mere fact that Islam was sprung from Arabian soil, and was so essentially an Arab religion, made the Arab ascendancy appear alike natural and necessary. But the rulers trusted overmuch to their prestige. Criticism reared its unwelcome head. Persian upstarts began to review the basis of the Arab claims. The Qur'an stated that although Allah had divided mankind into peoples (*shu'ub*) and tribes, the noblest were those who trusted Him most.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, contended the Shu'ubites, the Arab was no better than the non-Arab. Traditions were invented to clinch the argument.<sup>12</sup> The new critics travelled still further along this promising path. Awkward comparisons were suggested between the glories of Persian annals and the paltry past of Arabia. Some even raised a doubt whether Arabic could be indeed the language of the celestials. In short, the Persians succeeded in proving to themselves that they were quite as good as, if not better than, their Arab masters.

The 'Abbasids, themselves Arabs with Persian sympathies, soon perceived that Islam's centre of gravity was moving Eastward. In the opposite direction the path of advance was still blocked. For in spite of constant hammerings the Byzantine power remained an effective barrier. And the forces of Islam could subdue none but already decadent countries. The transfer of the Khalifat from Damascus to Baghdad has been commonly counted a clever stroke of policy, and an indication of the Muslim's ability to think imperially. It was no doubt a bold step, attended by many obvious advantages. The new capital linked together Syria, Persia and Mesopotamia, the lands which seemed to promise best for the cause of the Prophet. Moreover, Baghdad's situation on the Tigris offered some

prospect of maritime dominion and good outlets for trade.

But the picture has another side. The removal of the capital helped to stamp Islam for all time as an Eastern and Asiatic religion. It may be a fact that such limitation is inherent in the creed itself, and that Europe could never have become, to an appreciable extent, permanently Muhammadan. 'Ex oriente lux' has only a particular application. In any event, a Baghdadi Khalifat meant, sooner or later, farewell to the vision of Muslim splendour in the West. Thus Islam made the great refusal. Not for long could Spain, North Africa, and Egypt be governed from Baghdad. Quickly they broke away. The unity of the Khalifat disappeared. The empire became a kind of loose federation, made up of rival and jealous States.

The Arabs, in fact, lost a rare opportunity. Had they concentrated all their efforts against Constantinople, instead of frittering away their resources in the East, it seems probable that they would have conquered the Byzantine Empire, and overrun central Europe. The controversy about images was at this period widening the gulf between Rome and the Bosphorus; the Northmen constituted a growing menace; Frank and Lombard were engaged in deadly feud; and no Holy Roman Empire had yet arisen to bring cohesion to the warring elements. Charles Martel could with difficulty defeat an expedition sent against him by a single province. How would he have fared, if confronted by the army of all the Saracens?

The answer to such speculations is that the forces of Islam were no longer capable of one combined effort on the grand scale. The initial impetus which urged Khalid on his victorious path had spent its force. Islam was fast turning into an international cult, and concerted political action became ever less feasible.

Yet a restricted ambition brought certain compensations. Baghdad, under the earlier 'Abbasids, attracted both wealth and learning. The Khalifs of this dynasty, unlike the Umayyads, carefully observed the laws and ritual of Islam, and their crimes were forgotten amid the brilliance

of their courts. A glance at the life and work of Al Mansur may serve to illustrate the ethical and political ideas prevailing at that day.

Cruel, crafty and treacherous as this Khalif showed himself throughout his career, his worst actions may in some degree be excused on the ground of dire necessity.<sup>13</sup> His throne and his dynasty were in constant danger. Abu Muslim, who had played the part of king-maker, and had set the 'Abbasids in authority, might seem to have a clear claim to imperial favour. Yet, so long as he lived, he must remain a potential menace to Mansur. And the Khalif, discovering a crevice in the citadel of his rival's cunning, enticed him to his death. As for the Banu Hasan, they were open rebels, trying to set up a Khalifat of their own at Medina; and strangely absolved by Malik ibn Anas, one of Islam's four great legislators, from their oath of loyalty to the 'Abbasids.<sup>14</sup>

The vindictive spirit of Mansur was insatiable. It was not enough that his generals should win victories for him. He insisted on handling the scalps of his principal enemies. When the head of Ibrahim lay at his feet, Mansur compared his own joy with the delight of a thirsty traveller who finds a stream in the desert.<sup>15</sup> Such delight in gloating over the remains of a fallen foe is perhaps specially characteristic of Muhammadan history. The Qur'an supplies a heavenly precedent. Allah, too, loves to gloat over the torments prepared for His enemies. Why then should His followers be expected to forgive the dead? The date of the death of Sivaji, the Mahratta leader, is remembered in the sentence 'The Kafir went to hell', which by the Persian method of *Abjad* reveals the year in question.<sup>16</sup> In the 'Adventures of Haji Baba'—a book which the Persians of a century ago accepted as a faithful account of their country—we read how Russian heads were 'salted, and sent off in great parade and ceremony to the Shah of Persia, who never will believe that a victory is gained until he sees these palpable proofs of it'.<sup>17</sup> One thinks of his Parthian predecessor taunting the head of Crassus. At the present day on the Sind Frontier, the Baluchi cultivator, when he

takes his revenge, almost invariably hacks his adversary to pieces with an axe, preferring a spectacular and sanguinary murder to the use of poison or pistol.

Once, at least, Mansur was repaid in kind. He had ventured to appoint as Governor of Spain one 'Ala ibn Mughith. Unfurling the black flag, the sombre emblem of the 'Abbasids, 'Ala found to his cost that the Saracens of Spain definitely declined to acknowledge the distant authority of Baghdad. His head, together with the flag, was placed in a sack, and sent by 'Abdur Rahman to Mansur.<sup>18</sup>

The Persians, on the contrary, were proud of Mansur, and early in his reign a pantheistic sect, the Rawandiya, more Buddhist than Muhammadan in their doctrine, affected to believe that the Khalif was an incarnation of the Deity. His principal ministers they identified with the most celebrated of the angels.<sup>19</sup> When Mansur, lest he should alienate the orthodox, rejected and punished these impious flatterers, the Rawandis changed their tune, raised the standard of revolt, and were promptly exterminated. The whole episode was ominous of the vagaries into which Persian speculation has wandered during its quest of the Ideal Man. It is said of Coleridge that he wanted better bread than can be made with wheat. The Rawandis are the precursors of those hungry Muslim souls whose religious instinct whispered the hint of a more satisfying revelation than the Qur'an supplied.

Mansur, one imagines, cared nothing for theology. It was enough for him that his election as Amir of the Faithful ensured a position of power and pomp. Towards the herd of believers he probably entertained a feeling of contempt. An Arabian adage asserts that people follow the religion of their kings. Provided religious disputes did not touch his Khalifat authority, Mansur was not inclined to interfere. In accordance with a growing fashion, he manufactured traditions of the Prophet for the purpose of supporting his own policy. He said, for example, that Muhammad had forbidden provincial governors to receive anything in excess of the fixed revenues allotted to them.<sup>20</sup>

The political value of *hadith*, considered as propaganda, was now well understood. The authority of the Prophet had become a sort of makeweight or appendage, to be added to any theory or precept which the Khalif might choose to enunciate. Obsequious doctors of the law contrived to unearth a number of traditions favourable to the family of 'Abbas.<sup>21</sup> Such forgery of the words of the Prophet reveals a curious gap in the moral sense. Beside it, the false Decretals pale into insignificance. It is one thing to father upon an early Pope a letter which he never wrote; it is quite another to ascribe to the founder of a religion something he never said. Some years later a Muslim declared: 'In nothing do we see pious men more given to falsehood than in Tradition'.<sup>22</sup> Mansur himself was not unduly fastidious, and could misquote in a letter a text of the Qur'an.<sup>23</sup>

Doubtless to his subjects he seemed none the less a pious Musalman when he engaged in the study of astrology.<sup>24</sup> Here also he might have cited passages from the Qur'an in his defence. The book rather suggests that the Jinn steal the secret knowledge which descends to the lowest heaven, and like Prometheus communicate their information to human beings.<sup>25</sup> But according to one tradition Muhammad described astrology as a mere branch of sorcery.<sup>26</sup>

Less, perchance, to the liking of the people, Mansur appointed a Christian as court physician, and is reported even to have supplied him with wine.<sup>27</sup>

But the outstanding achievement of this Khalif was the founding of Baghdad. The site which he selected possessed every advantage, a fact originally recognized by the Assyrians, who had planted a city there in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>28</sup> Mansur's scheme for a round city, with its triple walls and four equidistant gates, appears to have been entirely his own. At the very centre stood the mosque and the green-domed palace—the mansion of the Khalif considerably outshining in splendour the house of Allah. Thus there could be no uncertainty as to who was the main figure in the picture. Solomon might incur

the charge of a like presumption in making the Temple an annexe to the royal residence.

In the matter of town-planning, Mansur was ahead of the age. His design betrays an almost American symmetry, combined with a touch of Napoleonic imagination. The outer wall was surrounded by a moat, fed with water through underground conduits. Between the outer and central walls ran a Ringstrasse. Four thoroughfares, radiating from the middle of the city to the four gate-houses, divided the circle into quadrants.<sup>29</sup> It is characteristic of Mansur that he allowed nobody but himself to enter the central area riding. All others, however high their rank, were obliged to dismount at the gate-houses, and proceed on foot. Ever suspicious, moreover, in that atmosphere of treachery, the Khalif scented danger in the multitude of foreign merchants who thronged the city. And profiting, it is said, by the friendly hint of a Greek envoy, he ordered the markets to be removed beyond the walls.<sup>30</sup> In a like spirit of caution he divided the barracks for the troops into three blocks, separating the jealous tribesmen of Modhar and Yemen from each other, and from his Persian bodyguard.

Mansur was essentially the despot. But he was shrewd enough to combine with his despotism a considerable admixture of justice. We may picture him, as he rode in state through the round city, suddenly waylaid by some victim of oppression, clamouring loudly for redress. It is, indeed, interesting to remark that the word '*arz*' which is still the common name of a petition in the East, radically denotes 'coming from the side', breadth as opposed to length. Thence it signified crossing or interrupting the free passage of a king. This right of direct access to the highest authority has always been a distinguishing mark of Muslim government, and has served, in theory and appreciably in practice, to soften the asperities of tyranny.

That the empire of the 'Abbasids should be governed by feudal methods was no doubt inevitable. Any approach to the Roman municipal system, so well calculated both to waken civic self-respect and to bind subject peoples



to the paramount power, would have been hardly intelligible to the political genius of Islam. The true 'civitas' was constituted by the bond of a common religion. In Persia the Muhammadans had already found a feudal State, and they were content to continue the same form of polity. The delegation of authority, not by any means the surrender of it, might well commend itself on general principles. The Khalif himself ruled as the delegate of Allah. What more natural than that the process should be developed downward? Mansur, however, like William the Conqueror, knew that the inherent danger of feudalism lay in the temptation of the delegated authority to become independent. He was resolved to be a real monarch, not a shadowy overlord. He realized the wisdom of the ever-green Oriental maxim, that the first duty of a government is to govern.

Accordingly, Mansur displayed the utmost discernment in the exercise of his patronage. Some degree of nepotism he could not resist. If in the distribution of the prizes he had forgotten his own relatives, it must have seemed the extreme of churlishness. Of this particular abuse Islam has no monopoly. And her annals might be searched in vain for a parallel to the action of Paul III, who made cardinals of his two grandsons while they were yet boys. 'Do not neglect your friends and relatives', is among the recorded maxims of Mansur.<sup>31</sup> He took care, however, to bestow many of the important posts on foreigners, and by his discovery of Khalid bin Barmak secured for the dynasty the assistance of talented administrators. A most efficient Secret Service Department spied upon the provincial governors, and kept the Khalif well informed of all that happened. Governors who had amassed undue wealth were compelled to disgorge, even though the offender might chance to be the Khalif's own brother.<sup>32</sup> In those days Verres would have enjoyed but a brief career.

To Mansur moreover belongs the distinction of anticipating the method of the capital levy, as a device for replenishing the State treasury. He acted on the assumption, probably justified, that the wealthiest of his subjects

had gathered riches by dubious means. When he needed money, he obtained it through inflicting large fines on selected individuals—a somewhat Machiavellian plan, which, while it discouraged a dangerous and undue opulence among the few, was regarded with cold complacency by the masses.<sup>33</sup> If any of his victims dared to cavil, Mansur might remind him of Sura 102, on the Accumulation of Riches.

Throughout the stormy course of his reign, the versatile Mansur found opportunity to encourage learning and literature, deeming these, it may be, among the number of religious activities, and therefore rightly to be aided by the State. He it was who laid the foundations of Baghdad's fame as an intellectual and artistic centre. 'Seek learning, even though it be in China', the Prophet is supposed to have said. And Mansur, turning with relief from the dreary task of rebel-hunting to the calm world of letters, displayed a comprehensive taste. 'Ali Dulama, the negro court-poet, appears to have been rather a court-jester, and a man of doubtful orthodoxy.<sup>34</sup> Muti bin Iyas, an Oriental Villon, was not much better.<sup>35</sup> But the Khalif, in the matter of payment for complimentary verses, had his own tariff. Thus he insisted on cutting down the lavish reward which Madhi, the heir-apparent, had bestowed on a certain minor poet. Greedy of largesse, the citizens nicknamed Mansur the Father of Farthings.<sup>36</sup> Most Muhammadan rulers who showed much care in distributing public money (so far as money entrusted to them could still be called public) were branded with the same stigma.

The 'Abbasid line produced no second Mansur. When his strong hand was removed, the break-up of the Khalif's empire proceeded more speedily. It is true that Harun-ar-Rashid, whose memory has been lighted through the ages by the false glamour of the Arabian Nights, made some attempt, by his meticulous observance of the Haj, to restore the ideal of a single united Islam. On one occasion Harun performed the journey to Mecca on foot—an act admirably calculated to stir the imagination of his subjects.<sup>37</sup> But the effort came too late. Already the province of Ifriqiya was practically lost. Trouble in Syria

and the north grew serious and persistent. Harun, moreover, exhibited all the vagaries of authority uncontrolled. Muhammadan historians dilate upon the integrity of his dealings with Nicephorus, the crafty Emperor of the Greeks. They scarcely try to excuse his suicidal faithlessness towards the Barmecides.<sup>38</sup>

Most of the 'Abbasid autocrats displayed a kink of character. Ma'mun may be counted the most curious among them all. Possibly he had heard of Plato's warning that the cities would have no respite from evil until philosophers became kings, or kings philosophers. The influence of his Barmecide tutor may also have served to widen his mental horizon. Ma'mun was at any rate acute enough to perceive that the basic tenets of Islam stood in need of revision. Two centuries had elapsed since the Hijra, but religion, in the form officially taught, seemed to be stagnant. The mildest venture into the realm of common sense encountered at once the barrier of the perfect and changeless Qur'an. If the conscience of Islam were to be set free from the grip of mortmain, obviously the first step must be to dethrone the Qur'an, and to disabuse men's minds of the notion that revelation is something fixed and static. The Qur'an, argued the Mu'tazilites, was, after all, only a book, and to be treated like any other book. To regard it as uncreated was to aim at Islam's most sacred tenet, the unity of God. An entity coeval with Allah (Islam not yet having guessed that time belongs only to phenomena) must be on a level with Him. Moreover, the book itself does not definitely lay claim to so exalted a status. The Qur'an, unlike the Bible, is very loud in its own praise, but scarcely purports to have existed from all eternity, save perhaps within the mind of Allah. Cryptic references to the Mother of the Book (*umm ul kitab*)<sup>39</sup> and the Preserved Tablet,<sup>40</sup> coupled with a general assumption of perfection, might easily betray the believer into deifying the Qur'an. On the other hand, as the rationalists pointed out, the Qur'an is admittedly a missive (*tanzil*),<sup>41</sup> some of its verses were abrogated, and it describes events in the past tense.

When doctors disagreed, Ma'mun dared to decide. He gave his vote in favour of the Mu'tazilite doctrines. Content for some years with the mere expression of his opinion, the Khalif eventually set up a kind of inquisition, with a view to forcing the heresy on his subjects. The edict issued by him in the year 833 is not void of psychological interest. Striking a lofty attitude, he declares that the vulgar mob has neither insight, nor knowledge, so that it cannot distinguish between the Creator and the creature. After quoting texts to prove that the Qur'an is a thing, and hence created, the Khalif classes all members of the opposite camp as 'vessels of ignorance and beacons of falsehood'. Every Qadi who maintained that the Qur'an was uncreated was to be stripped of his office.<sup>42</sup>

Reflecting on the significance of Ma'mun, one is tempted to observe that the more the Muslim changes, the more he remains the same. This Khalif threw in his lot with the party which was endeavouring to lift the burden of fatalism, and to encourage men to think for themselves. Yet he failed to grasp the real principle involved, and only diverted his native bigotry into a fresh channel. Liberty of thought meant for him that his subjects should be free to believe precisely what their Khalif believed. The old orthodoxy had become a heresy.

The tendency on the part of heretics to persecute seems due partly to the desire for revenge, partly to the confounding of religion with politics, and also, in some measure, to that spirit of cocksureness which the Qur'an instils into the minds of its followers, even the most recalcitrant. Lapse of centuries has made but little difference. Thus the Babis may fairly be ranked among Islam's heretical sects. The Bab and his self-styled Khalif, Baha Ullah, both insisted on the universal brotherhood of men. But the Bahais dream of a political supremacy, and would like to set up in every town a House of Justice, composed entirely of Bahais, and superseding all other government. Pending the consummation of this scheme, they are not averse from furthering their cause by the methods of the assassin.<sup>43</sup> A prophet, they declare, is no more to be

blamed for removing an obdurate opponent than a surgeon for amputating a diseased limb.<sup>44</sup>

The inquisition introduced by Ma'mun, and continued by his successors Mu'tasim and Wathiq, was, in conception, no more than an extension of Muhammad's holy war (*jihad*). The Prophet would certainly have been shocked at the prospect of Muslim persecuting Muslim. But he had sanctioned a dangerous principle. His weapon was never 'bathed in heaven'. The sword blessed for the slaughter of the infidel might with equal piety be turned against the Muslim who erred from the faith. In the heat of theological debate it is easy to denounce the opponent as an unbeliever.

As regards the Mu'tazil dispute, each side was fighting for a phantom. One party failed to perceive that the thoughts and the narrative contained in the Qur'an must have existed in the mind of Allah from the beginning. In this sense the book might be termed uncreated. But the rival party likewise did not appreciate that the revealing of Allah's thoughts by dictation in a particular language amounted to a creative act, even though it were true that Allah habitually thought in Arabic. At the root of the matter lay faulty ideas about God and the nature of inspiration. Allah is so august that He cannot, consistently with His dignity, communicate His thoughts through the medium of the human mind. The message must come direct and ready-made. So far as the Qur'an is concerned, the importance of Muhammad is not above that of a typewriter. For the Musalman never sees that in the last resort persons, not books, are inspired. Nor would he agree that the ultimate test of inspiration is to be found in conscience, whether it be the individual conscience or the 'communis sensus fidelium'. The Arabic tongue, like the Hebrew, has no noun which adequately denotes conscience.

Perhaps, too, the quarrel partly originated in a confusion between the Logos and the written word. We know that Christian influences were at work in the court of Ma'mun, and the curious Christian epistle of Al Kindi indicates with what freedom the respective merits of Chris-

tianity and Islam were allowed to be discussed. John of Damascus, who resigned the Khalif's civil service in order to enter a monastery, had already written a manual of arguments against Islam, and had anticipated the method of Ramon Lull's Disputations.<sup>45</sup> The Damascene was especially devoted to problems concerning the Person of Christ. Hence there are grounds for the belief that the doctrine of the Logos was becoming familiar to Muhammadan savants.

But it seems the fate of Islam to misconstrue Christian dogma. Those who rejected the eternal generation of the Son, on the ground that the relation between a father and a son must be of the earthly kind, would similarly stumble at the Logos. In fact, they would be quite capable of interpreting the opening words of the Fourth Gospel as 'In the beginning was the Qur'an.'

At all events, during the reigns of Ma'mun and his two immediate successors, the uncreated Qur'an was at a discount. As commonly happens in times of persecution, every man had to be a theologian and a partisan. Sometimes his life and liberty would depend on the view which he professed in a matter entirely beyond his comprehension. Wathiq displayed a peculiarly thorough fanaticism. When, in the course of war with the Greeks, an opportunity occurred for an exchange of prisoners, he refused to ransom any Musalman captives who did not subscribe to his favourite shibboleth.<sup>46</sup>

The inquisition rendered the greatest possible disservice to the cause of Islam's progress. It was essentially a case of Islam stifling its own self. Persecution on behalf of so-called free thought provoked a violent reaction in favour of the conservative school. Had Islam developed on the lines proposed by the Mu'tazilites, the Muhammadan conceptions of God and man, and of the relation between them, must have been profoundly changed. Delivered from the shackles of fatalism, cowering no longer under the shadow of the final, infallible book, the Muslim mind might well have advanced to the vision of a righteous God, revealing Himself in nature and in the hearts of common men, and

demanding righteousness from His responsible followers. Thus might Islam have burgeoned into a true theocracy, and the Khalif's realm have been not far from the Kingdom of God.

The protest was vain. The splendid opportunity went unseized. Thought resumed its favourite swaddling-bands, more than ever resolved to guard against the rashness of growing up. Henceforth, the limits within which independent religious opinion might be expressed were clearly marked. Premises might vary, but the conclusions had to conform to a single pattern. Islam has generally grudged the right of private judgment, and requires that truth should be accepted at second hand. The Muslim is not expected to 'prove all things'. That has already been done for him by the Qur'an. So also, in respect of any particular *hadith*, the main question is not whether it commends itself to reason, but whether it can be traced back by an unbroken line of succession to the Prophet, or to one of his Companions.<sup>47</sup>

A North African convert once declared: 'When I regarded every word of the Qur'an as sacred, my critical faculty was chloroformed. It seemed sacrilegious to question'.<sup>48</sup> The craze for the infallible, to which Islam so successfully ministers, can only be satisfied at the cost of the individual intellect. The attitude of acquiescence in the decrees of authority extends and expands from the purely religious sphere until it darkens all the capacities of the mind. Such a tendency may be seen in the exaggerated regard which is accorded to teachers and holy men. Custom demands that every student should be the disciple of a master, whom he must treat with the same feeling of obsequious veneration that Lucretius entertained towards Epicurus. A student directing his own studies becomes a sheer anomaly. Independent research borders on the profane. A man without a teacher is counted a disciple of Satan. At the present time, in Muhammadan schools and colleges the scholars are required to be entirely submissive and receptive, not to enquire about the why and the wherefore.

## CHAPTER II

### TURKS AND MUGHALS

THERE is a theory that every religion, if it is to achieve any measure of success, needs the impetus of a race other than that in which it came to light. Greece and Rome, reluctantly surrendering to Christianity, left upon it indelible marks and lent it powerful aid. Hellas contributed her thought, Rome her organization. Somewhat similar is the part which the Turk has played in Muhammadan history. He lacked, no doubt, the Greek genius for speculation. But by throwing the immense weight of his practical political wisdom into the scale, he succeeded in redeeming the fortunes of Islam. At the end of four centuries the empire of the Khalifs, which had already been long crumbling, showed signs of falling to pieces. It was reserved for the Turk, with his imperial and dominating temper, to regenerate a decadent institution, and to bestow on it a long lease of new life.

The best friend of the Turks would scarcely affirm that they are a naturally pious people. They had not the religious instinct of the Jew, or even the Arab's capacity for enthusiastic attachment to a spiritual cause. To this day the Arab uses the invidious phrase 'Turks and Muslims'. He pours scorn on the Turk for his want of culture, just as he himself is despised by the Turk for inability to govern.

In fact, the Turkish race, like the ancient Romans, seems generally to have looked upon religion as a means to a political end. Long ere they turned Muhammadan, the Turks had enjoyed a distinguished though chequered career. Starting from their original home in the vicinity of Lake Baikal, they harassed China with constant raids. The Chinese chronicles relate that these barbarians used to wait for a full moon to favour their plundering expeditions; that they would blush to die of illness; and that



they burned horses with their dead warriors. The Great Wall of China, built in the third century before the Christian era for the purpose of keeping out such a menace, must have stimulated the westward migration of the Turks. That migration was certainly not due to religious motives.

A thousand years later (A.D. 750-850) we see the Turkish Empire of the Uighurs adopting Manichaeism as the State religion. Between 800 and 1000 the Seljuq Turks changed their creed no less than three times.<sup>1</sup> The fact indicates that, either they possessed singularly open minds, or, more probably, they took a superficial view of religion.

The manner of the Turk's entry upon the Islamic scene recalls the story of the camel, who, on the pretext of cold, pushed first his nose into the tent of the sleeping Arab, then his head, neck and hump, and at last his whole body, telling the Arab that if he felt uncomfortable he might go outside. The later 'Abbasid Khalifs showed themselves actually affable towards the camel. Mu'tasim, distrusting equally the Arabs and the Persians, surrounded himself with a Pretorian guard of 70,000 Turks, recruited from slaves of Turkestan. No wonder that the Khalif soon sank to the position of a puppet in the hands of his mercenaries. Already, A.D. 935, in the captain of the guard is officially recognized as 'Amir of the Amirs'. In 1055 the Khalif Al Qaim took the extreme step of inviting to Baghdad Tughril Beg, the Seljuq leader, though it might be more correct to say that Tughril invited himself.<sup>2</sup> Thenceforth the Khalifat was but the shadow of greatness. The title might still belong to the 'Abbasid line, sovereignty was no longer theirs. The empire had become substantially Seljuq.

The same proud indifference to creeds which characterised the Turks was to be found in their kinsmen the Mongols. Jengiz Khan made a sort of religion out of military discipline, and cared not whether his soldiers were Muslims, Buddhists, or Christians. Hulagu had a Christian wife, and the early Mongol invaders appear to have been more favourable to Christians than to Muhammadans.<sup>3</sup> But gradually, after the Buddhist section had returned to China, the Western Turks and Mongols drifted in the

direction of Islam. So that, before the end of the thirteenth century, practically all Turks had turned Musalmans; and the Crescent had ousted the Cross from the steppes of Tartary.

The belligerent programme of Islam was exactly suited to a race which specialized in offensive tactics. It offered a ready assurance of the divine approval of their enterprises; for a Musalman fighter, however worldly his cause, could always claim to be contending in the way of Allah. Moreover, the Turks of this period were wanderers on the face of the earth, and Islam was clearly a faith for nomads, entirely congenial to such a superbrigand as Timur, who, in the style of Alexander, could declare: 'As there is but one Lord in heaven, so there should be but one on earth. The world is too small to satisfy the ambition of a great soul'. Timur, although he seems really to have loved devastation for its own sake, posed as the champion of the faith, and said that his invasion of India was intended for the destruction of temples and idols, and for the cleansing of a land which had been defiled by false religions. However, the fact that he was prepared to spare the city of Delhi on payment of a ransom argues an occasional readiness to compound with infidelity.<sup>4</sup> Timur did at least exempt from the general sack the quarter occupied by the 'Ulama and the Saiyids.

His tenderness towards the Ottomans after the victory at Ancyra (1402) likewise shows Timur in the light of a Muhammadan statesman. No doubt he perceived that if he unduly humbled the Ottoman power, he would merely be playing into the hands of the Christians. The Ottomans, bellicose as the lame leader himself, had become the main rampart of Islam against the forces of the Christian Emperor.

The rise of the House of 'Othman is among the most mysterious things in Oriental history. How was it that the little fief of Sugut and a few pastures in the locality of Brusa, conferred as a prize on Ertogrul by a Seljuq chieftain, could expand into a world empire? 'Othman, son of Ertogrul, possessed both ambition and genius. He knew what he wanted. And circumstances curiously com-

bined to further his plans. Mongol incursions had greatly weakened the Seljuq dominion. The Byzantines, being engaged in civil war, troubled not themselves about the fortunes of the Greeks in Asia Minor. Despairing of help from the West, the people of Brusa yielded up their city to 'Othman, and became Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

No permanent political institutions were founded by the Mongols. They could only break empires, not make them. But 'Othman, perhaps deliberately imitating the policy of the earliest Khalifs, resolved to build up, from small beginnings, a Muhammadan State, based on a system of ordered rule. Jengiz Khan had observed that an empire might be won on horseback, but that nobody could govern it on horseback. 'Othman and his talented successors grasped the supreme importance of methodical and detailed administration. The misfortunes of the Arabs could be traced to the fact that they did not sufficiently interest themselves in the art of governing. They entrusted the hack-work to alien hands, which eventually usurped the reins of authority.

Warned by the pitiable spectacle of the declining Arab Khalifat, the Ottoman Sultans decided in favour of a thoroughly centralized despotism. Their view of the State differed from that taken by the Arabs. The Turk desired not so much an absolute dogma as an absolute sovereign. And it is worthy of note that the word Sultan is derived from the Arabic root *salit*, meaning 'to be despotic or violent'. This ideal demanded that the State should be in essence a military organization, with the addition of Islam as a sort of useful appendix.

The reign of Orkhan affords an excellent illustration of Ottoman ideals and methods. Orkhan seems to have been a man of tireless energy. Still the nomad, he could escape the lethargy which Islam tends to induce in its sedentary followers. That observant traveller, Ibn Battuta, who met him at the freshly captured city of Nicaea, declared that 'he possesses nearly a hundred fortresses, which he is continually visiting for inspection and repairing'.<sup>6</sup>

Orkhan was clever enough to absorb large numbers of

Greeks into his new Islamic State. His success is no exception to the general rule that the creed of Muhammad gains its moral victories only over degenerate cultures. Just as heresy and schism in a Church never really indigenous prepared the way for the Muslim invasion of North Africa, so in the case of Asia Minor the Ottoman advance derived great assistance from the domestic quarrels of the Byzantine Christians. But it has never been completely explained why the Nicaeans, after a thirty years' siege, could prove so false to the glorious past as to renounce Christ for Muhammad.<sup>7</sup> They were not forcibly compelled to adopt this course. Perhaps sheer weariness drove them into the Muslim fold, or else they were dazzled by the meteoric brilliance of the Ottoman achievement.

But Orkhan had other means of seducing the Greeks from their faith. His ingenuity devised a feudal system, based on the condition of military service, and limited to Muslims. The Christians were obliged to pay a tax which was so calculated as to ensure their remaining in debt to Muslim money-lenders. The system may be contrasted with that of Akbar, whose feudalism ignored all distinctions of religion. By the allotment of small holdings, held on a kind of Indian Rayatwari tenure, Orkhan effected two objects. He secured for himself the permanent allegiance of large masses of soldiers, and he prevented the rise of a landed aristocracy.

Under later Ottoman rulers the same tenure was continued, although it seems to have grown more precarious. Thus we learn that in the seventeenth century the caprice of the Sultan, as paramount lord of the soil, frequently cancelled hereditary claims. Typically Turkish, as well as profoundly Muhammadan, is the monarch, who in return for a cooling drink amid the heat of the chase, frees a peasant from the rent of his cottage and fields, bestowing a title to them which nobody will ever dare to question.<sup>8</sup>

The other far-reaching contrivance of Orkhan was the elaboration of the Pretorian guard into the select corps of Janissaries, the 'new soldiery', whose name has become a synonym for the agents of oppression. In this instance

Orkhan again succeeded in killing more than one bird with a single stone. His plan (at least as developed by the Sultan Murad) aimed at the conversion of Christian youths by compelling them to take service in the Ottoman army. Such was at all events the main motive for introducing the Janissaries, who later became a powerful instrument for the undermining of Christianity in the Balkan countries, and for the further expansion of the Turkish nation. The Janissaries also constituted a confidential bodyguard, bound to the Sultan alike by interest and sentiment. From him they received maintenance, and from among his courtiers their generals were chosen. The spoon which the Janissary wore in his turban was intended to remind him that he was essentially the Sultan's menial.

Had he stayed to consider the history of the Pretorian Turks under the Baghdadi Khalifs, Orkhan might have foreseen that by instituting this famous corps he was laying up trouble for rulers who came after him. Increasing gradually in number and impudence, and equipped with a treasury of their own, the Janissaries became a constant menace to the State. In 1512 they forced Bayezid II into abdication. Later the political acumen of the Ottomans invented callous but effective means of reducing the danger. The Janissaries were sent on forlorn expeditions to Crete and Hungary ; the scum of Asia Minor leavened their ranks ; upstarts gained promotion at the expense of the veterans ; the pursuit of trade was encouraged ; and a liberal bribe could buy exemption from the rigours of active service.<sup>9</sup>

In the matter of diplomacy Orkhan was certainly not more unscrupulous than the intriguing Greeks with whom he had to deal. When Cantacuzenos, eager at any cost to circumvent the Palaelogi, offered his daughter Theodora to Orkhan in exchange for six thousand soldiers, the Sultan naturally seized his chance. Ostensibly he fulfilled his side of the agreement. But in secret he arranged that the troops which he sent should render his father-in-law no appreciable aid.<sup>10</sup> As to marrying an infidel, Orkhan doubtless deemed himself well justified, if thereby he could win a footing on European soil. With a view to conciliating the

religious objectors, he issued a decree requiring the Janissaries to become members of the order of Baktashi Darweshes.

Contemporary with Orkhan, there reigned at Delhi the cruel Muhammad Taghlaq. He too had Turkish blood and great ambition. Caprice prompted him to transfer the whole population of Delhi to Daulatabad, a distance of more than seven hundred miles. If we may believe Ibn Battuta, who visited Delhi soon afterwards, this compulsory migration was a piece of revenge on the part of the Sultan for abusive letters received from the inhabitants.<sup>11</sup> But the punishment bore no reasonable relation to the offence, and affords one more instance of that want of balance which so often has characterized Muhammadan rule. Regarded as a piece of statecraft, the removal to the Deccan turned out an utter failure. Back to the Panjab the wretched remnant of exiles were obliged to march, and for the future they probably took more care in the wording of their petitions. The episode indicates at once the hatred and the fear which Muslims had put into the hearts of their Hindu subjects. One wonders what would have happened if, in 1911, the decree had gone forth that not only the files and personnel of Government, but the entire population of Calcutta, should emigrate to Delhi.

According to Fénelon, power is poison. Muhammad Taghlaq, despot and doctrinaire, could pursue his wild schemes unchecked. He must needs tamper with the currency, and issue copper coins. But he had forgotten the forger. The imperial mint lacked the means of making the new coinage distinctive. Counterfeits quickly made their appearance in enormous numbers, and the value of the coins fell to practically nothing. Equally unsuccessful was the Sultan's attempt to introduce the system of paper money which Kubla Khan had invented in China.

Ibn Battuta gives a graphic glimpse of Sultan Taghlaq, whom he describes as 'of all men the fondest of making gifts and of shedding blood'.<sup>12</sup> He relates how access to the Hall of Audience is gained through a series of closely guarded doors, at the first of which, by way of encouragement to visitors, sit the executioners. Thence, past long

lines of clerks and flunkeys, one reached at last the meeting-place of prince and people. The Sultan's daily darbar is marked by barbaric pomp. Around his throne stand the armour-bearers. The royal horses come prancing in, the elephants make their salaams, and the courtiers cry *Bismillah*. Giving and receiving of presents appear to have been the chief items in the list of agenda. The monarch displayed a whimsical liberality. He once paid a thousand silver dinars for each verse of a flattering Persian ode. On the occasion of a State entry into Delhi, catapults placed on the elephants would shower coins (not of copper) among the multitude.

Some golden crumbs fell to the lot of the Moorish adventurer. A perfect stranger to the country, he was appointed a magistrate, and received the revenue of a group of villages, besides other gifts which were delayed in transit by an intriguing treasurer. But before long, upon a trivial pretext, the smile of the Sultan changed to a frown. Ibn Battuta, to escape death, turned mendicant, and fasted heroically, reading each day (so he asserts) the whole of the Qur'an. Muhammad Taghlaq took him back into favour, and made him his ambassador to the King of China. So the Moor, finding the expedition to his taste, said farewell to his patron, and began to beat the drum of departure. He was not the first notable Muslim traveller to learn the fickleness of Muslim potentates in foreign countries. Alberuni got only a cold reception from Mahmud of Ghazna, and endeavoured to console himself by cultivating friendships with Hindus.<sup>13</sup>

The fugitive 'Abbasid Khalif, from his retreat in Cairo, had given or sold to Muhammad Taghlaq the title 'orthodox King of India'. Firuz, the next Sultan, followed the path of peace and piety. To the harsher precepts of the Qur'an he was splendidly false, and in some directions he anticipated Akbar. For him the improvement of irrigation in the Panjab counted as a more urgent affair than the waging of a holy war. He could observe the good points of an infidel. He chose a converted Hindu for his wazir, and admitted non-Muslims to political power. Seeing

that his subjects were unable to repay the State loans, Firuz perceived that 'novae tabulae' would be the wisest expedient, and cancelled the debts by a stroke of policy which would have delighted the heart of Tiberius Gracchus.

Such large liberalism was accompanied by a certain narrowness. Firuz could shed some of the prescribed prejudices of Islam ; but others clung as closely to him as the deadly garment of Nessus. He would take no step without consulting the Qur'an for an omen. He persecuted Shi'ahs and idolaters, taxed the Brahmans for being Brahmans, and forbade the erection of any new temple in what he was pleased to describe as a Musalman country.<sup>14</sup>

That is precisely what India—even North India—has never been. Muslims were always in a minority, just a community of conquerors amid vast masses of subject peoples differing utterly from them in religion and culture. The presence of this alien population must have exercised a sobering influence on many Muhammadan rulers, making them, perhaps, in their innermost consciousness, a shade less convinced about the absolute claims put forward on behalf of Islam. In lands like Arabia and Persia, where, apart from the question of heresy, nothing suggested a doubt, or prompted a concession, those claims were naturally enforced in their entirety. Hindustan presented quite another sort of picture. There the Muhammadans had to live side by side with critics more numerous than themselves. The Hindu leaven could not altogether fail to take effect.

An inclination towards compromise is clearly evident in the Turkish dynasty, vulgarly known as the Mughals. Babar, indeed, was too busily engaged in fighting to bestow much thought on the art of government. He cared for nothing in comparison with military renown. He was mad after fame. His one passionate desire was to regain the empire of Timur the Lame. His memoirs display a lofty contempt for all things Indian.<sup>15</sup> The people, the horses, the grapes, were alike inferior. The hardy but refined mountaineer despised the softness of the plains. In the matter of administration Babar merely imposed the martial law favoured by the Mongol invaders. It does not appear that he took much real interest in religion.



His grandson Akbar is reckoned by many modern apologists for Islam as a magnificent example of what Islam can produce in the way of monarchs. But on a general estimate of his reign, it is difficult to see how Akbar can properly rank as a Musalman. An almost equally good case could be made out for writing him down a Hindu or a worshipper of the sun. Such was obviously the view of the historian Badauni,<sup>16</sup> and probably also of the Muhammadan population as a whole. The emperor showed himself decidedly more modern and more tolerant than his contemporary, Queen Elizabeth. But a toleration which put Hindus on a level with Muslims, and included Rajput princesses in the imperial harem, amounted to a renunciation of the Prophet's creed. Muhammad himself would assuredly have classed Akbar as a thoroughgoing Kafir. Akbar, like Elizabeth, approached the religious problem from the point of view of the statesman. Resolved to gather all India under one umbrella, he thought his plan might best be carried out if he could invent a type of religion to which all might agree. The average Musalman must have been bitterly disgusted when he beheld his emperor, passionless and impartial, solemnly listening to theological debates in which even Jesuits and Parsees were allowed a share, as though religion were still an open question. The 'divine faith' that issued as the official outcome of the palaver was a studiously vague Theism, a thing of shreds and patches, a bundle of borrowed beliefs. Akbar essayed to introduce a religion which should be no religion in particular. He might as well have tried to speak in a tongue which was no particular language. A manufactured and artificial religion has no more chance of succeeding than Esperanto.

But at least the subtle mind of Akbar well understood that only the bond of a common religion could unite the various communities of India. If he had been able to foresee the history of the British Raj, he would surely have been confirmed in his distrust of political institutions as a remedy for the deep diseases of the soul. He reflected that Islam would be unequal to the task. Ulti-

mately it would not prove to be a religion of reconciliation. The inveterate hatred and contempt which seemed bound up with it might smoulder for a time, only to burst into fresh flame, involving more war, more misery. And persecution, in the view of Akbar, defeated its own purpose.

His new creed might be described as in substance a purged form of Hinduism, without priesthood, ritual, child-marriages, or widow-burning. His alliances with Hindus brought in their train ample gratitude and faithful service. The one lasting achievement of his reign—a land revenue system which carefully classified the soil, and assigned to the government no more than a third of the gross produce—was the work of Todar Mal, a Rajput, whose policy was doubtless inspired by the emperor.

Hardly any Muhammadan prince can hold a candle to Akbar. He stands alone and aloof. His ideas were not those of his time, and can never commend themselves to the adherents of the Qur'an. Probably the nearest imitation of Akbar is to be found in the Persian Shah 'Abbas (1585-1627), whose comprehensive affections allowed him to stand godfather to an English child.<sup>17</sup> Shah 'Abbas likewise founded special colonies for Armenian Christians. Both monarchs came under Christian influences, which may have been more powerful than is often supposed.

Akbar's deserted capital, Fathpur Sikri, a study in pink and white, exhibiting still a freshness as of yesterday, with its imposing gateways, its artistic halls and houses, its pavement chessboard, where weary slaves were the chessmen, stands like a picturesque promise unfulfilled, a dream interrupted. Suddenly and strangely abandoned—some say for a defect in the water—the town is the counterpart of the emperor's own creed, which, void of the living water, survives only as a reminder of his vain ingenuity. Maybe the unpopularity of the spiritual experiment prejudiced the chances of that City of Victory.

Aurangzib, not Akbar, lives on in Muslim memory as the enskyed and sainted ruler. For he was always the good Musalman, just as conscious of a mission as Akbar. But Aurangzib conceived his mission in a very different

light. Utterly sincere, he steadfastly refused to compromise with his principles, or to fall in with the Turkish way of subordinating religion to political expedience. He disdained to woo the affection of the unbeliever, whether Rajput or Maratha. His piety had in it a fine carelessness, and was not to be turned from its course by the most alluring offers of temporal advantage. In temperament and outlook Aurangzib somewhat resembled Philip II of Spain. The attempt of the one to conquer the Deccan for the faith was no less quixotic than the other's expedition against England. Both men, sadly surprised at the failure of what they accounted a divine mission, sought solace in the spirit of resignation, discovering in their own personal unworthiness the source of disaster.

If we compare the Muhammadan Aurangzib with his Hindu opponent, Sivaji, the balance is not all in one direction. True, it is difficult to imagine the emperor stooping to the treachery of Sivaji, who enticed a hostile commander to a parley, and making as if to embrace him plunged into his side the deadly steel claw. But Aurangzib, too, could employ the weapon of craft. It seems tolerably clear that when he invited Sivaji to negotiate with him at Delhi, he intended to keep him prisoner.

As regards the standard of chivalry, and the treatment of captives taken in battle, honours are easy. Aurangzib showed utmost respect to the brave defenders of Golkonda. Sivaji took equal care of captured women and children.<sup>18</sup>

The Turk ought presumably to have proved the right man to govern the Muslim world. In building up an empire he had shown the greatest enterprise, energy and resource. Difficulties vanished at his touch. He seemed born for whatever is arduous. He brought to the task those very qualities which the people of Islam so sorely needed. But, like Galba, he disappointed. Many and various excuses have been put forward for the general failure of Turkish administration. The countries conquered by the Ottomans were lands with distinguished annals and traditions, which made the Turk appear in the light of an upstart and intruder. The Arabs especially, who have a talent for

sulking, remained aloof, if not actually hostile, determined to give the newcomer the barest minimum of co-operation. And this attitude of the Arabs, although most pronounced in Yemen and the Hijaz, set the tone for the subject population in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.

It must be admitted, on the other hand, that the Turks took small pains to conciliate the feeling of those whom they ruled. They had but one fixed mode of government, no more adaptable than the bed of Procrustes. In the faculty of imagination they were conspicuously deficient. Hence they lacked in great measure the understanding and fellow-feeling requisite for the conduct of empire. Still less did it occur to the Turkish mind that imperial responsibility sooner or later demands self-sacrifice. If any power or privilege had to be sacrificed, the Turk was resolved it should not be his own. The Qur'an supplied no corrective to these selfish notions. In regard to disputes among believers, the book gives the following precept: 'If two parties of the faithful contend against each other, then make peace between them; and if one of them does an injustice to the other, then fight against the one which did the injustice, until it return to the commandment of Allah'.<sup>19</sup> The advice is somewhat ambiguous, since the difficulty lay in deciding which party was the oppressor, and which the oppressed. Commenting on this passage, the Ahmadiya editor declares that, had the Muslims followed this injunction, their power would not have departed. But it must be confessed that the Qur'an in general offers no convincing motive for the love which should cement the household of faith.

The common opinion of Ottoman methods is reflected in the proverb which says that wherever the Turk sets his foot, the grass ceases to grow. Much of the trouble in the administration of the provinces was due to the want of a strong central control. More and more, as time went on, the Sultan preferred to shut himself up in his palace, taking no thought for anything outside Constantinople, save when a prospect of winning military glory presented itself. Though he might remain the fountain of

honour, he cared no longer to be the fountain of justice. Sulaiman the Magnificent (1512-1550) had three great wishes—to see his mosque completed, to ensure a good supply of water for the capital, and to take Vienna.<sup>20</sup> But his chief passion was hatred of the Shi'ahs, who in their turn detested him and his whole tribe. It is told of Sulaiman that on one of his journeys he put up at the house of 'a certain Asiatic', apparently a Shi'ah. After the Sultan's departure, his host solemnly disinfected the building in order to remove the pollution it had sustained. Hearing of this, Sulaiman ordered the man to be slain, and his house destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of the withdrawal of the Grand Seigneur from the detailed work of government, the intrigues of the seraglio began to assume unseemly importance, and the real power was increasingly usurped by the 'Ulama and the Janissaries. An extraordinary state of affairs prevailed at the Ottoman court in the seventeenth century. Rycaut has left us a circumstantial account of incidents which recall the times of Claudius and Messalina. Eunuchs and negroes turned legislators, cabinet councils were held in the women's apartments, and officials appointed or dismissed at the whim of an adventuress. There follows an amazing catalogue of crimes and disorders. The Old Queen, backed by the discontented Janissaries, engages in a plot against the young Queen, mother of Sultan Muhammad, a boy of nine, to whom the Spahis, or royal cavalry, remain faithful. In vain the Mufti of Greece, and he of Anatolia, appeal against the shedding of Muslim blood. Stamboul is plunged into confusion. Spahis cut off the arms and noses of Janissaries whom they capture. The Janissaries, by way of retaliation, entice into their ranks a number of Greeks and Albanians, promising them privileges and exemption from tax. At length the Mufti is induced to sign the death-warrant of the old Queen. A troop of armed men invade her apartment. She tries to save herself by scattering gold pieces among them, but they are not to be turned from their purpose. Her earrings, worth a year's revenue of Cairo, are torn from her; the jewels and talismans sewn into her robes are ripped off.

Finally she is strangled, and her body laid in the Sultan's mosque. Thereupon the victorious party, true to the Ottoman view of religion as a political weapon, cause the banner of Muhammad to be exhibited to the mob, announcing that whoever refuses to rally to that standard will be counted an infidel, and his wife will be divorced. By this device the Janissaries are overawed. The drama, or melodrama, closes with the strangling of their mutinous Agah; and the oppressed citizens, to vent their hatred, pierce the dead man with spits and pitchforks.<sup>22</sup>

Morning prayers in the palace on the day after must have resembled a hymn of triumph. Altogether, it is not an edifying glimpse into the life of an imperial city. Such scenes indicate that Islam had ceased to be a restraining influence on conduct. The superstitious dread which the holy ensign might inspire in the Janissary cannot be interpreted as truly religious feeling. And there is little reason to think that the doctrines of his nominal faith induced him to abate one jot of his cruelty or his greed. However, he was at all times ready enough to pick a quarrel with a Christian or a Jew, so that the streets of Constantinople had to be guarded by strong patrols of military police, who arrested the worst offenders.<sup>23</sup>

When the capital set so indifferent an example, it was not to be expected that the provinces should fare better. Extortion modified by bribery was the usual programme of the Ottoman governor, and the lapse of centuries has wrought little change in his methods. But being mainly absorbed in the collection of revenue, he and his underlings had small leisure or inclination for other kinds of interference. Hence in spite of fiscal tyranny the subjects of the Ottoman Empire enjoyed a fairly large measure of personal and social freedom, a circumstance which served to lessen the Turk's unpopularity. His very omissions and negligences were reckoned to him for virtues. Moreover, there yet clung to his rule the inherent dignity and distinction of the Imamatus which the Sultans had arrogated to themselves since the capture of Cairo in the year 1517.

So far as the sense of responsibility to the governed is

concerned, the Ottoman ruler may be compared with Gibbon's tutor, who well remembered that he had a salary to receive, and only forgot that he had a duty to perform. A conquered country was primarily viewed as a prize or a gold-mine, not as something held in trust. There was little or no attempt made to train the minds of the people by means of political ideas, or to shape them for independence through the medium of local self-government.

In Western Arabia, which the Turks held for the greater part of four centuries, they accomplished hardly anything either for the advancement of Islam or in the way of developing natural resources. Masters of Mecca and Medina, they might have made the Haj a safe and pleasant expedition for their fellow-Muslims, instead of leaving them to be robbed by desert brigands and harassed by pilgrim-brokers. 'Wickedness in the Haramain' has long been proverbial.<sup>24</sup> Ibn Sa'ud, the Wahabi King of Arabia, stated at the Muslim Conference in 1926: 'For the first time for many generations there is peace in the land, and perfect security to the pilgrim.'<sup>25</sup> The Meccans, it seems, infinitely preferred the easy-going methods of the Turk to the strict and surly style of the Wahabis, who govern according to the letter of the Qur'an, and who frown equally on the worship of saints and the smoking of tobacco. One service, it is true, the Ottomans did render to the pilgrims; they built the Hijaz railway. But they employed German engineers for that sacred undertaking, and the higher railway officials were always Turks. To-day it is clear enough that the railway was entirely a military venture, and that the interests of the pilgrims counted only as a minor consideration.

The same inefficiency marked Turkish administration in the province of Yemen. The troops seldom received their pay, they were ill-equipped and profoundly discontented, and commanded by a nondescript crowd of lethargic officers.<sup>26</sup> Further, the Turkish military authorities had not sufficient foresight to establish good camel-corps, a piece of neglect which was to cost them dear during the Arab Revolt.<sup>27</sup>

The Arab gendarmerie, or *Zabtiyah* (from *zabat*, 'he confiscated'), who were employed to assist the tax-collectors, and for disagreeable work in general, rivalled the Turkish troops in raggedness. So uncertain was their remuneration that shopkeepers declined to give them credit on the chance of their recovering their back pay.<sup>28</sup>

Currency in Yemen was hopelessly muddled—Turkish and Austrian dollars jostling against English sterling and Indian rupees. As for land revenue, the Turks collected what they could, often with military aid. Having no settled policy in any department of government, they drifted along, hardly caring to ascertain, much less to satisfy, the aspirations of the Arabs around them. Such public works as they engineered turned out costly failures. After the harbour at Hodaida had been completed, it was discovered that the depth of the water would not suffice for the landing of a cargo. An expensive plant for making ice was set up at the same port, and speedily became a rusty ruin.<sup>29</sup>

Here, as elsewhere in the Turkish Empire, the taint of bribery defiled the whole administration. Doughty remarks : 'In the Dowla all is now bought and sold'.<sup>30</sup> The Arabs, it may be urged, were as much to blame for giving bribes as the Turks for taking them. Both alike were Muslims. And the Qur'an does not explicitly denounce bribery, or lay any great emphasis on the importance of integrity in public life. Yet the book does in one verse (Sura 6. 62) condemn the acceptance of unlawful gain (*suht*), which some interpret as referring to bribery.

Nothing can better illustrate the Turks' view of Islam, or the influence of this creed upon their conduct, than the manner in which they treated the peculiarly sacred institution of *Waqf*, or pious bequests. It must be admitted that this form of charity has frequently been used for private and non-religious purposes. A testator would nominally bequeath his whole fortune to a charitable object, with the proviso that the bulk of the accruing income should be payable to his descendants, leaving only a fraction for actual charity. But this legal device



merely throws into stronger light the inviolable character supposed to attach to moneys thus invested. It was thought that the best way to ensure the payment of a legacy was to bring it under the aegis of *Waqf*. There all would be safe from the hand of sacrilege.

So, too, imagined the mother of Sulaiman the Magnificent, in the heyday of Ottoman splendour, when she dedicated a sum of money to the service of Allah. Yet in 1841 the Ottoman government, on regaining Palestine from Ibrahim Pasha, misappropriated the income from the bequest, which by that time yielded £10,000 per annum. Not until a Christian Power took over the administration was the money restored to its proper use.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, in Mesopotamia, owing to Turkish mismanagement of *Waqf* revenues, hundreds of mosques and schools fell into a state of decay. And it is significant that after the Turk had been ejected from the country, the income of these endowments rose in five years from three to thirty lacs of rupees.<sup>32</sup> In Turkey itself, likewise, where mosque authorities used to accept land even from Christians, leasing it back to them in the name of the Celestial Landlord, the *Waqf* funds were corruptly manipulated. Often the water-supply of a town might be richly endowed, but the pipes and aqueducts lay hopelessly neglected.<sup>33</sup> What better evidence could be adduced to show that the influence of Islam on the political morality of the Ottomans has conduced not to progress but actually to regress? For the popularity of *Waqf* in the past points to an age in which the sanctity of these funds was duly respected.

The lot of the cultivator under Ottoman despotism showed but small improvement as the years rolled onward. It made no difference to him that the local governors, on their return to Constantinople, were often compelled to disgorge their evilly amassed wealth for the purpose of swelling the Sultan's treasury. Each province had to provide not only its official quota of revenue, but also the pay of its Turkish troops, and a princely salary for the Pasha, who was in a hurry to become rich. The term of office for the Governor of Cairo, in the seventeenth century,

was limited to three years. But even in so short a space he succeeded in making an enormous fortune.<sup>34</sup> He accomplished this mainly at the expense of the peasantry. No remedy lay open to the oppressed. There was no tribunal of appeal, such as the *Dikasteria* of ancient Athens, ready to investigate the grievances of provincials. Conditions remained much the same until the nineteenth century. Muhammad 'Ali, the Albanian adventurer, too intent on grandiose projects to take thought for the agriculturist, omitted to alleviate rural misery. The land-tax amounted to about eight shillings per acre, apart from an indirect tax on produce. Sometimes the revenue arrears of one village were transferred to the residents of another, who had already paid their dues in full.<sup>35</sup>

In Syria the Ottoman regime was hated by the Druses, Maronites, Armenians, and the minor communities generally, and barely tolerated by the Arabs. Many a Syrian village paid in the course of a year five or six times the amount of its assessment. The tax-collector arrived on the scene at frequent intervals, and on each occasion had to be appeased by a substantial bribe, frequently confiscating, in the end, both crops and cattle. As a result of these exactions, large villages were often to be bought at an absurdly low price.<sup>36</sup> All was grist that came to the Turkish mill. If Arabs went fishing on the Sea of Galilee, the collector awaited their return, and in the name of the Sublime Porte demanded a goodly proportion of the haul. It would not occur to the Turkish mind that the fish in the Lake might justly be reckoned as *res nullius*. Other iniquitous taxes in Palestine included fees levied in lieu of military service, and a tax in lieu of forced road labour.<sup>37</sup>

The same spirit prompted the Turk to make profit out of the perpetual and deplorable dispute between the Greeks and the Latins touching the custody of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Perhaps he would have been more than Muslim if he had not striven to keep alive a quarrel so advantageous to his pecuniary interest, albeit the story of that famous shrine reflects little credit on either Islam or Christianity. The fact remains that the Ottoman authori-

ties, had they chosen, could have ended the dispute without difficulty. Instead, they granted contradictory rescripts and concessions first to one party, then to the other, fanning the flame of jealousy with a truly Vestal perseverance. It is said that after the burning of the Church in the year 1808, when the rival claims of the Patriarchs and the Franciscans for the privilege of restoring the edifice were referred to an Ottoman tribunal, the Greeks spent no less than two and a half million roubles in buying a favourable judgment.<sup>38</sup> Verily, the Holy Sepulchre proved itself 'a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence'. The guard of Turkish soldiers, stationed before the doors of the Church in order to maintain some semblance of peace between two Christian sects, was a sight to make angels weep.

The Christian pilgrims likewise were a source of gain to the Ottomans. The Governor of Jerusalem not only levied taxes on the pilgrims, but forced the convents to pay fees for the right of organizing processions in the city. Further, he charged a duty on the relics and souvenirs—many of them the handiwork of local Arabs—which were annually conveyed thence to Europe. It is fair to add that Muhammadan pilgrims visiting Jerusalem on their way to Mecca met with hardly better treatment.<sup>39</sup>

The urban administration under the Turks was not less cruel and arbitrary than their treatment of villages. Citizenship had no meaning. A sort of rough justice was done by the Chief of Police, who united in himself, to an unhealthy degree, the functions of judge and executioner. Originally, as his title (*muhtasib*) implies, he was an accountant or overseer of the market. He is one of the stock figures of Islam, and a familiar feature of the Arabian Nights, where the tales told by the Constables reveal the unpopularity of these officers, and the admiration felt for the clever rogues who managed to outwit them. The powers and the methods of the Chief of Police remained substantially unaltered down to the nineteenth century. Thus in Egypt he had authority to put any offender to death, without a trial. In the matter of punishments he often displayed a fiendish ingenuity. He used to

deal with a dishonest butcher by putting a hook through his nose, and hanging a piece of meat from it. Once, when the *mukhtasib* met a man carrying a crate of earthen bottles, which he falsely stated to have been made at Qina, he caused his attendants to break each bottle separately against the vendor's head.<sup>40</sup> Evidently these officials believed in the maxim '*similia similibus curantur*', as though the remedy of oppression lay in the direction of more oppression. But it is also to be observed that the mass of the people continued cynically indifferent to such horrors. Reverence for the caprice of despotism choked the finer instincts of pity and sympathy which ought to have prompted rebellion.

International trade provided a further sphere for Turkish exactions and extortion. The Turks succeeded to the natural position of the Arabs as intermediaries between East and West. The Arabs, instead of attempting to close the trade routes, encouraged the exchange of commodities, and the Italian republics vied with each other in their attempts to secure a monopoly in spices. Among the Musalmans we observe none of that scarcely veiled contempt for commerce, as a thing illiberal and vulgar, which marked the ancient Greeks. Muhammad made trade for ever respectable by engaging in it himself. And the success of his bargains during the journey of the Syrian caravan (albeit the merchandise he brought back included a bundle of false ideas about the Christian religion) helped to win for him the hand of Khadija.<sup>41</sup> Maritime commerce was another matter. The Prophet is credited with saying: 'Whoever embarks twice on the sea is verily a Kafir'.<sup>42</sup>

But the Turks began to raise difficulties. They considered the Levant their private preserve, so that any foreign traders who wished to sail across it must be liable to pay an entrance-fee. As early as the fourteenth century the Ragusans concluded a commercial treaty with the Ottomans under Sultan Murad, and agreed to pay tribute in return for the privilege of being immune from robbery.<sup>43</sup> Venice followed the lead of Ragusa. Whether from love of

gain, or because they suffered themselves to become infected with Turkish commercial morality, the Venetian merchants abetted the slave traffic, and refused to help in the earlier Crusades.<sup>44</sup> When the Venetians, perceiving at length that treachery towards Christendom was an unsound policy, assisted at the defence of Constantinople, the Turks never forgave them.

But at least the Venetians won for themselves the system of preferential treatment, which later developed into the Capitulations. By this concession the Westerners enjoyed some degree of protection for person and property, and in particular a separate jurisdiction. The very fact of the Capitulations is a significant commentary on the nature of Turkish government. It is as if the Turks had said: 'We do not usually guarantee safety or impartial justice to those who reside within our borders; but since you foreigners are so fastidious, we grant you this exceptional favour.'

The privileges conveyed by the Capitulations centred round the universally recognized rights of ambassadors, being essentially an extension of their extraordinary dignity and status. Yet on many occasions in Turkey an ambassador was treated as being by no means sacrosanct. Malvezzi, whom Busbecq succeeded as the Emperor's representative, spent two years in prison at Constantinople. Rycaut quotes several instances in which ambassadors received most barbarous usage. Whenever the Turks found themselves at war with another nation, their first step was to make a prisoner of the ambassador concerned, and to hold him to ransom.<sup>45</sup> They thought, or pretended to think, that each envoy brought with him alternative instructions, to be used in turn according as circumstances demanded. So that the more he was bullied, the sooner would he produce terms acceptable to themselves.<sup>46</sup>

Such non-Muslims as were beyond the scope of the Capitulations could expect little mercy from their Ottoman masters. Jews, on the whole, fared badly. The Prophet, whose attitude to that race underwent so complete a change, describes them in the Qur'an as the most insolent

enemies of the faith.<sup>47</sup> Yet in later times, as the history of the Saracen dominion in Spain sufficiently shows, the Arab could be friendly with the Jew, and treat him almost as his equal. Both were Semites, and the natural ties of a common origin might sometimes prove stronger than the sundering influence of religion. But the Turks, untouched by sentiment, and accustomed to ride roughshod over defenceless communities, considered the Jews fair game, especially in outlying parts of the Empire. In Yemen, under Turkish rule, the Jews were not allowed to maintain schools or synagogues, or to build houses more than two storeys high.<sup>48</sup> According to Tully (an eye-witness), the Turks in Tripoli frequently tortured or killed unoffending Jews.<sup>49</sup> Apparently it was not merely Judaism that roused the wrath of the Turk. When he persecuted, he did so for reasons of State. He suspected the Jews of disloyalty. Also, perhaps, he was a little jealous of their enterprise and cleverness. And he could always plead the fact that Christian nations had been still more cruel to them.

Jealousy likewise may have been at the root of those official orgies of bloodshed which are known as the Armenian massacres. An Ottoman officer, discussing the causes of the massacre at Orfa in 1895, said: 'We used to be happy and peaceful, living in oriental fashion with our ancient abuses, which have entered into our very marrow, and from which Christians and Musalmans suffered equally. How much more enviable was our lot, when our country had only some humble Latin monasteries, and timid native Christians, who hardly dreamed of catching your western ideas!' The speaker proceeds to express the disgust with which he had seen a group of Armenians, dressed in European style. 'They looked prouder than ambassadors. To think that their fathers, quite modest money-lenders, considered themselves only too fortunate if, in a prosperous year, they could collect interest on their money instead of blows from the stick! Afterwards everyone began to talk of autonomy and independence and driving the accursed Muslim from the Armenian fatherland.'<sup>50</sup> These excuses for wholesale murder seem some-

what thin. It is no doubt true that the Armenians had their revolutionaries, wild men who vaguely contemplated a 'kingdom of Ararat', or Armenian Sion; that they played into the hands of Russia, who was seeking a fresh pretext for intervention in Turkish affairs; and that the Armenians were a troublesome race, perpetually engaged in domestic quarrels and intrigues. Further it is urged that the whole blame for the massacres rests on Sultan 'Abdul Hamid and his exploiting of Kurdish fanaticism. But the atrocities cannot be regarded as the work of one man, nor were they ever disavowed or condemned by Turkey as a nation. The actual slaughter was carried out by bloodthirsty mobs, acting with the connivance of Turkish officers. The military precision which marked the massacre at Orfa recalls the tragedy of Glencoe. A trumpet sounds the signal. When two thousand Armenians flee to their Church for safety, the Musalmans, led by a darwesh, burst in, pour cans of petrol over the refugees, and set the building on fire.<sup>51</sup> This and many similar incidents have left a lasting blot on Islam's reputation. The massacres in Armenia were just a fresh expression of the hatred for Christianity which the Qur'an so sedulously preaches. A religion, no less than a political agitation, must answer for crimes which logically result from its doctrines. Many crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity. But that same religion has gradually widened the outlook, and trained the consciences of its followers, until they could perceive that such actions were a denial of their faith, rather than an affirmation of it. Islam lacks this power of healing its own wounds. Its ideal is too easy, its moral tone too complacent,

'The flattering index of a direful pageant.'

There is no pressing forward to a better beyond, no vision of the heavenly kingdom set up on earth.

History, no doubt, can furnish instances wherein Christian peoples have preferred to be governed by Muslims, rather than by rulers belonging to their own creed. In the early days of the Ottoman Empire the Balkan races,

owing to their inveterate feud with the Latin Church, were inclined to welcome the Turks as pleasanter masters than Italians or Hungarians.<sup>52</sup> And the Turk, always an adept in profiting through the dissensions of Christians, made the most of his opportunity. The refusal of Constantinople to endorse the scheme of reunion drawn up at the Council of Florence in 1439 was perhaps not unconnected with the fall of the Byzantine power fourteen years later. It would be interesting to enquire how far the Eastern Church, in her uncompromising attitude towards Rome, has been influenced by contact with Islam. Quite probably the Patriarchs may have caught something of the dogmatic obstinacy of the Muslims. They might learn to regard the Latins in somewhat the same way as Turks regarded the Persians.

The Copts are another curious instance of a Christian community preferring Muhammadan, and even Ottoman domination—a trait which has persisted till recent times, when they sided with Egyptian nationalists in the anti-British movement. The causes of their perversion are clear. At first the Copts suffered considerable persecution. In the tenth century they were forced to wear heavy wooden crosses about their necks, and black turbans on their heads. They were also forbidden to ride horses.<sup>53</sup> But the Turks found a use for Coptic intelligence, and employed them as subordinate officials and clerks. Gradually the Copts showed signs of degenerating under the pressure of Islamic influence. Their language disappeared, save as the vehicle of ritual. They imitated the Muslims in prescribing prayer seven times a day, and the pilgrimage to Jerusalem became the Coptic *haj*. Being thus assimilated to Islam in their general outlook, the Copts arrived at the conclusion that they had more in common with Arabs and Turks than with the Christians of the West. Hence it is not surprising that many Copts are numbered among the leading members of the Wafd, and that on some recent occasions Copts and Muhammadans have actually joined in each other's religious services. A dimmed light is almost akin to darkness.



## CHAPTER III

### THE NEW TURKEY

THE twentieth century has seen tremendous upheavals in Turkey, Persia, and Egypt. But the motive power behind them was not religion. Revolutions happen in spite of Islam, never as a result of it. They are usually engineered by a clique; and the masses, taking their cue from the leaders, proceed to affect an enthusiasm for new political and social ideals, and to babble the jargon of liberty. Revolutions in the Orient are not, as in Europe, substantially popular in character. The movement works from the top downward. First comes the change, later the people discover reasons for liking it. Sir Henry Maine, writing nearly fifty years ago, observed: 'Vast populations, some of them with a civilization considerable but peculiar, detest that which in the language of the West would be called reform. The entire Muhammadan world detests it.'<sup>1</sup>

Modern Muslim thinkers are fascinated by all things French, more especially by the French Revolution. A Baghdadi Sheikh, writing of this event in 1914, declared that the aspirations of the Orient peoples were in perfect accord with that great movement. 'The truths it announced were ours: the same Supreme Being, the same universal Reason, the same sovereignty of law, which the logic of centuries and the genius of one heroic generation translated into practical rules.'<sup>2</sup> One fact which the Muslim doctrinaires particularly relished about the French Revolution was that it appeared in lay garb, and that it repudiated religion. Hence in Turkey, though to a smaller degree in Persia, the impulse towards reform became more and more dissociated from Islam. The Young Turks were in the main a party of agnostics, shrewd enough to foresee

that eventually a choice would have to be made between a progressive State and the Islamic system. Religious law afforded no inspiration, no hope of betterment. It could not be mended. Therefore, sooner or later, it must be ended.

Already, in the middle of the nineteenth century, Sultan 'Abdul Majid had promised a number of reforms, including measures for the safeguarding of life and property and for the security of land tenure. The reactionary influence of the religious authorities ensured that the promises were not translated into action. But meanwhile a new factor was at work. Turkish youths, educated in France and Germany, had gained some personal acquaintance with Western civilization and methods of government. They began to fear that if Turkey continued to travel along her ancient groove she was faced with certain and speedy doom.

In 1908 the exit of Sultan 'Abdul Hamid and the setting up of a Turkish parliament seemed to foreshadow a great advance. But the Young Turks had their own views on the meaning of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Nor did they intend that these three boons should actually be enjoyed by non-Turks. Their ideal was rather the Pan-Turanian. Everything must wear a Turkish hue. One Article of the new Constitution prescribed that henceforth all subjects of the empire should be called Ottomans, whatever the religion they professed. As for representative government, the parliamentary elections were managed in such a way that scarcely any non-Turkish candidate had the smallest prospect of succeeding. Moreover Turkish was to be the sole medium of instruction in the schools. And it was seriously suggested that the numerous Arabic and Persian words in the Turkish language should be discarded, just as in Turkey to-day the time-honoured title of Effendi is frowned upon, as being derived from the Greek.

The Young Turks endeavoured to carry out these changes in high-handed fashion. But for once their political sagacity was at fault. Arabs declined to be turned into

Turks by constitutional phrases and the bait of citizenship. They still regarded themselves as the aristocracy of the Muhammadan world. And the attempt to force them into the Turkish mould gave a powerful impetus to the pan-Arab movement, which later produced the Arab revolt. Other communities likewise resented the methods of the Young Turks. Hence the Great War found not only Arabs, but also Armenians and Assyrians, ranged on the side of the Allies.

Considered even as a scrap of imperial paper, the Constitution of 1908 was sufficiently remarkable. Until then the Christian subjects of the Porte had been viewed as undeserving of political rights. They were in the State, but not of it. Their money, not their service, was conscribed for the Turkish army. But according to the new idea, they became, at least in theory, an integral element of the body politic, and almost on a level with Muslims. By a stroke of the pen the old distinction between conqueror and conquered was done away. Those who had hitherto been ciphers would now rank as units. Islam never prompted a change so complete. The altered conception of the State, and its obligations, ran counter to the very precepts upon which the Qur'an perpetually harps.

Neither the reformation promised in 1908, nor the one which later became an accomplished fact, can justly be placed to the credit of Islam. They do not, as some argue, afford evidence of Muhammad's forward look, or of an expanding and progressive power in his religion. The slowly changing attitude of Hindus in India towards the matter of social reform, less dramatic but hardly less real than the Turkish recantation, exhibits a close parallel. The efforts for bettering the lot of Hindu widows, the recognition of the fact that there may be something good in the depressed classes, the increasing doubts about child-marriage—these are by no means the fruits of Hinduism. In fact, Hinduism could never have suggested such strange opinions except at the cost of stultifying itself. The change of mind is ultimately traceable to the impact of Christianity

on the Hindu conscience. Likewise, in the Ottoman case, the whole impulse in favour of revolution came from without. And maybe the leaders at Stamboul, who imagined they were copying a code and nothing more, did at the same time borrow a good deal from a faith which they professed to abhor. No religion can be expected to remove the defects inherent in itself. Was ever a devil cast out by Beelzebub ?

During the period from 1908 to 1914 official Turkey was busily engaged in intrigue with Germany, who at last persuaded the Imam to issue a decree proclaiming a holy war against the Allies. That decree could scarcely have been justified by any verse of the Qur'an. Certainly, the book urges Muslims to fight relentlessly against unbelievers.<sup>3</sup> Yet it nowhere enjoins them to intervene in the private quarrels of the infidels. The Khalif's proclamation aroused very little enthusiasm in the world of Islam as a whole. After all, the obligation to wage a holy war is not considered quite so sacred a duty as prayer or the annual fast. Arabs, who at the best of times had not much reverence for an Ottoman Imam, fastened on the unfortunate fact that the decree was published in one of the holy months, when such matters are supposed to be in abeyance. Hence the summons to a crusade produced no more than a few sporadic and half-hearted outbreaks, mainly in Egypt and Tripoli.<sup>4</sup> Since the protagonists in the European War were all equally non-Muslims, it appeared just as logical, and even pious, to fight for one side as the other. Throughout the course of the War, in spite of the efforts of Afghan and Bolshevik emissaries, the mass of the Muslim population paid no heed to the Turkish invitation, and continued loyal to the British Raj. And no troops of the Indian Expeditionary Force excelled in valour the Panjabi Musalmans.

Scarcely had the War ended, when Pan-Islamic sentiment revived. A revulsion of feeling took place in favour of Turkey, who stood forth as champion of Islam against the scheming Western Powers. Profiting by war-weariness on the part of the Allies, Turkey began to coquet with

Soviet Russia. It mattered little that the Bolsheviks were known to be hostile to all religions, including Islam. Probably they hoodwinked nobody by founding, in 1919, the 'League for the Deliverance of Islam'.<sup>5</sup> What the Turkish leaders wanted was assistance in contesting the plans of the Allies for the dismemberment of their country. They had no mind to imitate Bolshevik communism. The aims and methods of the Soviets were repugnant alike to the Turks and to Muslims in general. As for the Qur'an, so far as it contains the germ of any economic theory, it may be said to favour the capitalist. The importance and sanctity of property are everywhere assumed. In fact the Qur'an, to a much greater extent than the New Testament, discourages communistic experiments.<sup>6</sup> The tenor of its teaching could never bring about even the first stage of communism, in which the richer classes of a nation consent to be heavily taxed in order to provide doles and pensions for the poorer. At the present time the only Muslims who have all things in common are those living within the limits of Soviet Russia, where there is no choice in the matter. Certain orders of Darweshes in Arabia adopt a mild communism. But many Darweshes are men of wealth, and it must be noted that these fraternities hold quite unorthodox views.

Mustapha Kamal, however, the maker of New Turkey, had other arrows in his quiver, besides the alliance with Russia. By a bold stroke of statesmanship the capital was transferred to Angora. Ever since Muhammad forsook Mecca for Medina, the rulers of Islam have shown a remarkable readiness to remove their headquarters from one city to another. Mustapha Kamal made a profounder change. To break away from the splendid traditions of nearly five centuries, to shake off the familiar dust of Constantinople, involved no ordinary measure of courage and enterprise. The place to which the seat of government was moved possessed associations equally venerable, but of a different sort. Ottoman imagination would hardly be touched by the legend which assigned the foundation of Ancyra to King Midas, or by the irony of history

that chose the same spot for a Synod convened by the Semi-Aryans. But the fact that in 1402 Angora had been the scene of the first big disaster to the Ottoman forces, when Timur took Sultan Bayezid prisoner, might well have been considered an evil omen.<sup>7</sup> Yet neither the sinister associations of Angora, nor its forbidding situation amid the rugged Anatolian hills, had power to daunt the Kamalists. What they desired was a complete break with the past, a severance from the bad old ways and outworn beliefs whereof Stamboul was at once the symbol and the stronghold. Flight to Angora provided the chance of a new start. The Turk, hitherto a man of wars and battles, could now turn his attention to the constructive arts of peace.

The National Pact of Angora, signed in January 1920, may be reckoned not only the written constitution of the Turkish Republic, but also its revised prayer-book and declaration of faith. In this document the rights of minorities and the principle of self-determination are recognized, and a modern brand of administration is promised. Perhaps the Pact is more notable on account of what it leaves unsaid than for what it actually asserts. For it makes no mention of Allah, the Qur'an, or Muhammad ; it invokes no blessing from above ; it does not, like the constitution of 1908, declare that Islam is the religion of the State ; and it deliberately ignores the Khalif. Altogether, a strange manifesto for an Oriental country. What is even more strange, the Pact has even been translated into action. A Parliament, with no Upper House to dilute democracy, was set up in Angora. At first a collection of yokels, the Grand National Assembly, falling into line with its Western models, now consists largely of lawyers and professional politicians.

Yet, in a sense, it is only a case of Muhammadan theocracy revived. The benevolent despot is no longer Allah, but Mustapha Kamal, whom the Turks actually adore and deify. Hedged by this divinity, the dictator imposes his will upon the people. He prescribes for them what they are to read, what they must wear, how they must think.

He intends for them an essentially lay government and a lay civilization. He has declared that none but a weak ruler needs the support of religion. Thus Mustapha Kamal entirely rejects the old Ottoman idea of Islam as a useful weapon for controlling the masses. In effect, he invites his people to become agnostics, and put their trust in modern science. In New Turkey, as in Japan, patriotism has become the essence of religion, and secular progress the grand aim. With the aid of Mustapha Kamal, Turkish Islam has committed suicide.

The eminently practical mind of the Turk, never overawed to the same extent as the Arab by the authority of Muhammad and his message, has at length discovered that Islam is powerless to influence its followers in the direction required by the modern State. The gaps in the morality of the Qur'an begin to loom large. 'From its teaching you can learn to conquer empires, but you cannot learn to build a lasting democracy' are the words of a latter-day Turk. 'Our prophet is our Ghazi. We have finished with that individual from Arabia. The religion of Muhammad was all very well for Arabia, but it is not for us.'<sup>8</sup> The ordinances of Islam are regarded as an intolerable interference in the affairs of daily life. Constant visiting of the mosque for purposes of prayer is discouraged as a hindrance to work. Likewise the Ramdan fast, which renders the Muslim workman singularly inefficient during a month in each year, is being abandoned. Religion has been banished from the schools. The children who used to chant verses from the Qur'an are busy reciting a list of their rights as citizens. Resignation before the decrees of fate is yielding place to a healthier spirit of effort and enterprise. The religious orders, representing the old modes of thought, have been broken up, and their monasteries turned into schools or museums.

As might be expected, voices have been heard protesting against all this modernism. The attempt is made to show that the real Islam is perfectly compatible with national progress. The obstacles are attributed to degenerate doctrines which the followers of the Prophet have added to

his system. A Turkish editor in 1928 published an 'Open Letter to the Prophet Muhammad', wherein he says : 'Thou hast forbidden the worship of images. Yet thy representatives have worshipped only the outward form of thy work.' The writer proceeds to ask whether it is not rank idolatry to kiss the Qur'an, to make risky expeditions to Arabia, and to cloak hypocrisy under the veil of the pilgrimage.<sup>9</sup>

'Abdul Haq Hamid, Professor of Sociology and poet, is at pains to point out that the Holy Law of Islam does not in any way conflict with the sentiment of patriotism. To the man who asks the meaning of culture, he replies : 'Culture is life, thou fool.' In another poem he writes as if modern science must save the nation. 'Dost thou wish to serve Islam ? Then preach work and industry and effort !'<sup>10</sup>

Another Turkish poet, Zia Geuk Alp, likewise believes that the new wine can be contained in the old wineskins. Justice, he thinks, is something quite different from religion, and concerns the civil power. If justice does not agree with custom ('urf), it should be changed, and made to agree with it. Law is the servant, not the master, of justice. The State and religion are both equally sacred. The Khalif, who presides over the State, has alone the right to make laws. This he does without consulting the Mufti, the religious head. He takes for his precedents custom and agreement, and the Chamber of Deputies is his advisory council. The poet denies that the Khalif is a Pope, or a Dalai Lama, or a Tsar. He is by right the sovereign among all Muslim rulers, even as he is actually the sovereign of Turkey.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a more downright type of apologist, who, somewhat in the style of the Indian Ahmadiya, insists that in the twentieth century Islam is still a sufficient guide ; that it has not been superseded by modern progressive ideas, for the simple reason that it comprehends them all. For example, Prince Muhammad Sa'id Halim Pasha roundly asserts that Islam imposes on its adherents the positive duty of realizing themselves and of aiming at the utmost possible freedom. Hence, instead of a political right to be claimed, freedom is in the nature of a religious



obligation. All the trouble, it seems, has arisen from the popular error, which has engrafted fanaticism and despotism into the liberal and tolerant creed of Islam. The Turks, says our author, hoped to shake off their torpor through contact with Europe. 'They had forgotten,' he says, 'that Islam was the force which created their bygone greatness. They believed they must await the return of that past from the West.' He bewails the false reforms, which have destroyed the customs and traditions of centuries, and plunged the country into spiritual anarchy. He analyses the concept of nationality, and declares there can be no worse mistake than to regard Islam as anti-national. To produce a good Muslim is tantamount to producing a good Turk, or Arab, or Persian.<sup>12</sup>

Such arguments, surely, are false to history, and even to the present facts. If Islam gave the Turks everything necessary, if it satisfied all their spiritual and social needs, why have they abandoned it? The answer is that they have given a lengthy trial to that religion, and found it wanting. They are disillusioned, the charm has vanished, the spell is broken. The Ottomans, unlike most of the Muhammadan peoples, did throughout succeed in preserving some remnant of national consciousness. But this merely confirms the Arab taunt, that the Turk was always a lukewarm and half-baked Muslim. Islam, at least in theory, recognizes almost equally with Christianity that religion must bring in its train a particular attitude of heart and mind. But Islam goes farther, and too far. It seems to say: 'Love me, love my way. You no longer belong to a nation. Hence you need trouble no more about your national culture, your national ambitions. I can provide something better. Lend me your inferior language, and I will improve it with sacred Arabic words. As for books, the Qur'an alone is really necessary. What nobler code of law could you desire than that which the Prophet himself prescribed for the Arabs of his day? I will give you a new list of daily habits, and rules for every occasion. If you possess a national art, I will put it in leading strings, and guide it along the proper path.'

Republican Turkey has proved very clearly that Islam clashes with national ideals. As soon as Islam was cast off, the wheels of progress moved again, administration vastly improved, self-respect revived, the meaning of citizenship began to be understood. Turkey without Islam differs so profoundly from Turkey under Islam that the true character of the incubus which obsessed her becomes plain. Nobody can seriously contend that the change is a mere coincidence. No longer may the champions of Islam use their favourite deductive argument, which, starting on the assumption of Islam's perfection, attributes the age-long stagnation of the Turkish Empire to faults in the climate or the people themselves.

The new spirit has spread even to the villages. Local self-government is now a reality. The cultivators are made to feel they are something better than the pawns and playthings of authority. The governor, once the invisible tyrant, is to-day the accessible friend. Taxes have been reduced to moderate proportions. Village courts deal quick justice, and a determined attempt is being made to suppress brigandage. Angora boasts a model farm, where the agriculturists receive instruction in modern methods. And not far off stands a model village, with standardized cottages, communal wash-house, and a large school, but no mosque. The omission is significant.<sup>13</sup> Probably it was felt that the presence of a mosque in such surroundings would be in the nature of an anachronism, an unseemly reminder of the bad old times, a symbol of Islam's deadening influence.

Angora has thrown in her lot with Western civilization. Constantinople is a mosaic of east and west. Paradox as it may seem, only in Jugo-Slavia and other Balkan States does the original Turkish Islam still flourish. Sarajevo with its forty mosques ; conservative Roumania, where the clocks of the mosques, showing Arabic time, harmonize well with the unchanging style of dress and etiquette ; the Muhammadan hierarchy of Bulgaria, drawing salaries from State funds—these hardly suggest that Islam is striking its tents. At first glance it might be imagined that the

Balkans provide an example of Islam favouring the principle of nationality, in refutation of the Angora theory. But the strength of Islam in the Balkans centres in persons rather than in the merits of the creed itself. The secret is to be found with the Darwesh communities, who respond, even though unconsciously, to their Christian surroundings. The Baktashi Darweshes, in particular, are friendly towards Christians, and by maintaining a high level of character not only win recruits for their own order but fortify the position of Islam. One suspects, however, that few Baktashis, if cross-examined on the score of Muhammadan orthodoxy, would survive the test. None the less, Islam can complacently take credit for their goodness.<sup>14</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

### PERSIAN ISLAM

THE political inertia of Islam is nowhere more apparent than in the case of Persia, where she missed a great opportunity. History proves that Persia may claim to be one of the most conservative countries of the world. Reading the accounts of the Persian Empire given by Herodotus and Xenophon, we seem to encounter the very same methods of government which have prevailed in quite modern times. The territory controlled by Darius or Cyrus was divided into satrapies. Each satrap, provided he sent to the king a fixed amount of revenue, and a quota of military forces, might rule his province in whatever way his fancy pleased. The deputy satraps in charge of districts enjoyed a like liberty in return for similar services rendered to the head of the province. In the days of the early Roman Empire the Parthian dominions continued to be administered on the same lines. The sovereignty vested in the 'satrap of satraps', always an aristocrat, while the majority of the population held a status not far removed from slavery.<sup>1</sup> Ardashir, founder of the Sassanid dynasty, was both king and priest, and received his crown from the Chief of the Magi, even as Charles the Great was crowned by the Pope. The enormous power wielded by the Magi indicates the source from which Muhammadan Persia derived its fondness for a priesthood armed with the weapon of temporal authority. Although the very idea of a hierarchy is in theory repulsive to Islam, yet in this instance, the religion of Muhammad made terms with heathen ignorance, so that the fire-priest became the Mullah, and Persia remained for centuries a priest-ridden land.

Another outstanding feature of Persian history is the

persistence of the national spirit. Around the Sassanides there gather, like a halo, legends handed down from the days of Cyrus.<sup>2</sup> Precisely in the same vein the later Persians endeavoured to invest their rulers with something of the glamour and glory of a past age. Thus the motive of Firdausi's 'Shah Nama' was to link up the story of such heroes as Suhrab and Rustam with the poet's royal master, Sultan Mahmud. It was the same kind of service, the magnifying of both monarch and nation, which Virgil had rendered to Augustus. In like manner 'Umar Khayyam harks back to Jamshid and Bahram. Spurious genealogies are invented to show how the members of the Samanid dynasty, a Turkish house, are Persians of the bluest blood.<sup>3</sup> These fantastic legends were not the outcome of simple credulity or flattery. Rather they bear witness to a sense of continuity in the national annals, the spirit which demands Persia for the Persians, and a Persian king at their head.

No doubt the same desire of being thoroughly distinct from their neighbours urged the Persians in the direction of the Shi'ah faith. Although the nation did not make this form of Islam its official religion until about the end of the fifteenth century, a strong inclination towards Shi'ah tenets had been manifest from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> This tendency cannot be explained away as due to a merely perverse or arbitrary preference for one Khalif at the expense of another. Persians looked for a leader who should be not only high priest and half-divine hero, but also one of themselves. 'Ali appeared to combine in himself all the necessary qualifications. The marriage of his son Husein with the daughter of Yazdagird, the last Sassanid king, served to identify the 'Alid cause with the national traditions and aspirations, and struck the right political note. Many miracles were manufactured and ascribed to 'Ali, so that the real man became obscured by a bright cloud of romance, which fitted him to be the successor of the Zoroastrian Hormazd. Light, in one form or another, has always been the prime object of Persian worship. This is betrayed in the excessive fondness for

such names and titles as Light of Religion, Light of the Kingdom, Brilliant-minded, Light of Muhammad. The Sufis in like manner conceive of the mystic way as Illumination (*tajalli*).<sup>5</sup> So too the self-styled Khalif of the Bab was named Dawn of Eternity.

In Persia Islam entered into partnership with idolatries which it was powerless to overcome. The homage paid to light had an intimate relation with the craze for incarnations and emanations. Shi'ah teaching contrived to cater for both. Pre-Islamic Persia entertained the belief that somehow the sun-god had taken visible form in order to save the world. Mithras had once achieved the task, but there was no reason why it should not be done over again. The Persian has always shown himself well aware that his prophets, however plausible each of them may at first appear, do at length grow obsolete. Having fulfilled their function, they rank as 'emeriti', and must make way for fresh Avatars. The delightful prospect of awaking on one of Iran's gay mornings to learn that an incarnation of deity is to be seen in the streets of Yazd or Isfahan has consistently haunted Persian imagination, and added a relish to otherwise monotonous lives.

Now it is evident that the ordinary Sunni concept of Allah was not calculated to satisfy this vague but obstinate yearning. Muhammad, on the other hand, confessedly human, and an Arabian to boot, lacked the requisite trail of splendour. In short, Allah towered too high; and Muhammad, in spite of his miraculous night ascent, was too modest, too pedestrian. If Muhammad had refrained from announcing himself as the seal of the prophets, Islam might have escaped the schism between Sunni and Shi'ah, and even forestalled the Sufis. Faith cannot always be looking backward. Judaism bids its followers await the Messiah. Christians expect the Second Coming. Muhammad alone had a habit of shutting doors. Some of the doors were soon to be forced open, while others have rotted until they are ready to drop from their hinges.

The exaltation of 'Ali, though effected at the expense of the Prophet, met the demand for a demi-god. Again

the crude reverence for physical light asserts itself. 'Ali and the Imams were said to be all compact of luminous substance. Their bodies threw no shadows. Superior to the prophets, they could neither commit sin, nor dream of sinning. They were infallible, and possessed secret knowledge, passed on from one Imam to another. Certain devotees even transferred to 'Ali the Docetist idea which the Qur'an applies to the Crucifixion. 'Ali, they declared, had never died, and would in due course return. He was definitely deified by the sect known as 'Ali Ilahis and remains at least a superhuman figure in the minds of most Shi'ahs, probably more real and vivid than their mental picture of Allah.

In a country where Church and State are inextricably intermingled, the belief in a hidden Imam could not fail to exercise from time to time a determining influence on politics. Danger lurked in the theory that at any time a new prophet might arise, who, fortified with credentials of his own manufacture, could lay claim to secret knowledge and absolute authority. The Ismailian sect went the length of asserting that he who joined other authority to his Imam was guilty of the same offence as those associating other gods with Allah. Disaffection towards 'Abbasid rule produced a number of rebellions, led by religious upstarts claiming to manifest the heavenly light. Muqanna', one of these, called himself 'the veiled prophet', and said that in him men beheld the godhead through a veil.

It was thought that the arrival of the Mahdi (the Guided One) would introduce a millennium, wherein justice would flourish, and the 'Alid cause would come into its own. Muhammad is reported to have said: 'He who disbelieves in the Mahdi is an infidel', and again: 'There is no Mahdi except Jesus, the Son of Mary'.<sup>6</sup> Possibly the Parousia helped to inspire the Mahdist theory. Whoever the Mahdi may be, the Sunnis lay less stress on his coming. To them he is a luxury of fancy, to the Shi'ahs an article of faith. Sunnis, perhaps merely in order to spite the Shi'ahs, insist that the Mahdi must bear the same name as the Prophet of Mecca, and they ridicule the longevity of

the Hidden Imam. But in the world of Islam, Sunni and Shi'ah alike, belief in the Mahdi is a volcano always ready to belch forth flame. Kings and princes were no more than temporary viceroys or deputies of the Imam. And the temptation to pose as Mahdi had naturally a strong attraction for enterprising agitators and adventurers. The Northern African tribes proved especially responsive to such attempts. Ahmad the Mahdi, who rallied the Berber horsemen against King Alfonso III, played his part with skill. By a show of miracles he acquired immense influence, and in oracular fashion he used to give orders to his troops by means of signs, disdaining the method of human speech.<sup>7</sup> The device was well designed to capture the credulous Muslim. Similarly in the twelfth century the Berbers flocked to the standard of Ibn Tumart, who gave himself out as divinely appointed to overthrow the corrupt rule of the Almoravid dynasty.<sup>8</sup> More modern Mahdis include such widely different claimants as Muhammad Ahmad of the Sudan, and the less bellicose Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiya.

It is characteristic of Islam that political philosophy has always been ready to prove the truth of any popular heresy. In Persia Islam found a demand for emanations and incarnations, which were produced accordingly. Metaphysics could be so moulded as to yield consequences agreeable to the minds of the people. First came the heresy; its justification followed later. An instructive example of speculative thought lending itself to a political purpose, and supporting revolutionary tendencies, occurs in the writings of Suhrawardi, a philosopher of the twelfth century. Starting from the Platonic problem of the relation between the One and the Many, he declares that God is single in all His relations, and that therefore only one effect can issue direct from Him. This one effect or offshoot is pure light, both mental and physical. From this light there emanate the archetypes of earthly things, which, like Plato's ideas, operate on our world, and produce individual material things. The process of illumination applies equally to the political sphere. The very existence



of the universe involves order, which in turn depends on inspired philosophers, the framers of religious laws. Thus the world must from time to time produce such a leader and guide. Coming direct from Allah, and ranking as His representative, the leader has full authority to amend or supersede the laws prescribed by the Qur'an.<sup>9</sup>

Thinkers like Suhrawardi obviously strayed far from Muhammad. The philosophy of illumination (*ishraq*) wore a colour perilously similar to that of polytheism (*ishrak*). And yet the principle it embodies is true and wholesome. Beneath the Shi'ah fondness for successive manifestations of Allah there lies the recognition of the fact that religion must progress, that the world must advance in its knowledge of God. This aspect of Shi'ah doctrine was indeed full of promise. There is always hope for those who are seeking more light. But a fatal inertia appears to overtake every endeavour of Islam to improve itself. And a line of speculation which might have led to a clear grasp of the evolutionary principle in religion degenerated into hazy and fantastic fables about unedifying Imams and elusive deliverers. The hidden champions remained in hiding, and those who ventured to impersonate them were hardly the kind of persons to contribute any spiritual enlightenment.

Certain sects of the Sufis have elaborated the theory, and given it a different turn. Tired of waiting to realize the ideal, they prefer to idealize the actual. They impress their followers with a sense of the divine immanence by asserting that there exist a number of Substitutes (*abdal*), whose function is to maintain the universe. Their number is fixed. But they are mortal, and, when a member of the hierarchy dies, a Sufi from the lower ranks of sainthood is voted into his place. For the least of the Sufis is as good as any Prophet. The Substitutes traverse the world in human guise, and like the Wandering Jew have occasionally been seen.<sup>10</sup>

Judged by the cold pragmatic test, which Christians are bidden to apply, the doctrine of emanations cannot be said to possess much value. Ultimately it must be counted

a product of the mercurial Persian temperament. It affords but little help in everyday life, although responsible, perhaps, for some part of Sufi quietism. The distinctive tenets of the Shi'ahs have not raised the standard of public and private morality above the Sunni level. In general, the Shi'ah is more intolerant than the Sunni. The Zoroastrians had very strict notions about the uncleanness of other people; and the Persians under Islam appear to have inherited this exaggerated exclusiveness. Certainly they displayed it in their treatment of the followers of Zardusht.

In Yazd and Kirman the Zoroastrians were, up to the close of the nineteenth century, and even beyond it, subjected by the Muhammadans to many harassing and degrading restrictions. None of them might wear any colour save yellow, brown, or grey. They were likewise interdicted from the use of spectacles, finger-rings, and umbrellas, and compelled to wear shoes with turned-up toes. They were forbidden to add upper storeys to their houses. At Yazd they could not ride in the streets, much less sell food in the bazaars. Professor E. G. Browne records that during his visit to Yazd, a Zoroastrian was bastinadoed for accidentally touching some fruit which had been exposed for sale, and thus rendering it unclean to Musalmans.<sup>11</sup>

Until 1882 the Zoroastrians were liable for a poll-tax. The term *gabr*, whereby they are denoted, signifies the worst type of infidel. The alternative name of fire-worshipper (*atash parast*) is little less contemptuous, albeit commonly applied in Europe to the Parsees. In the Persian courts the Zoroastrians could seldom obtain justice. The very idea that a Musalman should be executed for the murder of a *Gabr* seemed to the Persian mind preposterous; the infliction of any punishment at all for such an act argued a substantial concession.<sup>12</sup> Only through the influence of the Bombay Parsees, with some British backing, has the lot of the Zoroastrian remnant in Persia been somewhat improved.

Jews in Persia have fared even worse. In the province

of Mazandaran it was the custom of the Muslims, whenever rain was badly needed, to disinter the body of a Jew, and to scatter the dust to the four winds.<sup>13</sup> There were towns, such as Tabriz, where, even in modern days, a son of Israel could scarcely exist.<sup>14</sup> Sometimes the Jews were forced to stigmatize themselves by wearing a distinctive cloth badge (*yahudana*). The nominal prestige attaching to People of the Book was apparently not of much practical value to the Jewish communities. Their genius for business clashed with native Persian greed, and in the matter of-clannishness the very Shi'ahs could teach nothing to a race whose motto was :

'Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti.'

The Jewish settlement at Kirman is described as utterly miserable.<sup>15</sup> But in Yazd the Jews enjoyed a rather better status, and ranked almost as citizens.<sup>16</sup>

The Christians in Persia consisted mainly of Nestorians and Armenians. The manner in which they were treated varied considerably, according to the personal caprice of Shahs and Governors. Sir John Chardin tells how a certain Chief Justice made it a practice to condemn unheard any Christian appearing in his court, counting it a capital crime for an Armenian to be engaged in a suit against a Muslim. 'Why should he not suffer the injuries that are done him, dog as he is, that does not know that the Christian religion is inferior to the Muhammadan ?' From the same source we learn that the Shah and his General extorted a large sum of money from the Armenians of Julfa.<sup>17</sup>

A century or so later the Armenians, it appears, possessed champions in high quarters. Thus in 1815 a Muslim mob at Teheran, being persuaded that a drought was caused by too lenient treatment of the Armenians, destroyed their churches and their wine stores. But Shah Fath 'Ali ordered the rioters to pay them liberal compensation, besides a royal grant from himself. It is also noteworthy that in the previous century that brilliant soldier of fortune, Nadir Shah, commanded a committee of Armenians and Catholics to translate the Scriptures into Persian. His idea was to emulate Akbar, and to introduce a

new eclectic religion. Mullahs and death forestalled his plan.<sup>18</sup>

Another phase of the intolerance inculcated by the Shi'ah branch of Islam is to be observed in the Persian attitude towards Sunnis. Under the Safavi dynasty (1499-1786) Sunni Muslims were actually required to pay a heavier poll-tax than the Zoroastrians. If a comet flashed through the sky, Persian astrologers prophesied a whole catalogue of plagues and disasters for the Sunnis.<sup>19</sup> The mere suspicion that Sa'di, the great Shirazi poet, was an adherent of the Sunni faith, has cast something of a cloud over his memory, and even provided a pretext for desecrating his tomb.<sup>20</sup> The same spirit of inveterate hate nerved the Persians in their constant wars against the Sunni Turks.

Passion invites passion. Theological fury has perhaps never been displayed with more intensity than in the loveless ranks of Islam. Nor were the Sunnis slow to return curse for curse. Rycaut cites a decree issued by the Mufti of Constantinople against the King of Persia and all his subjects. Having upbraided them with their rejection of 'Omar, 'Usman, and Abu Bakr, the Mufti accuses the Persians of omitting to say prayers and corrupting the text of the Qur'an. He describes the Persians as degenerate alike in doctrine and in manners. They cut and clip their beards, dishonour the holy colour of green, drink wine, eat unlawful meats, and indulge in polyandry. In brief, they are 'the kennel of all uncleanness and sin'. The Mufti therefore authorizes the believers to kill these Persian heretics. He ends his decree thus : 'I hope that the Majesty of Allah in the Day of Judgment will condemn you to be the asses of the Jews, to be ridden and hackneyed in hell by that despised people ; and that in a short time you will be exterminated both by us, the Tartars, the Indians, and Arabians, our brothers and associates in the same faith.'<sup>21</sup>

The invincible vanity of the Musalman, which so effectually prevents him from approaching unbelievers on equal terms was, at least until recent times, specially characteristic of the Shi'ahs. Towards the close of the seventeenth century, the Prince of Georgia, writing to the King of Poland, describes himself as descended from David

and Solomon, and as 'the Vanquisher of Vanquishers, the invincible King of Kings, the most high lord, Shah Nawaz Khan'. It is right to add that the Georgian also terms the Polish King 'Victor of Victors', and 'celebrated exterminator of rebels'.<sup>22</sup> The Persians thoroughly believed in the divine right of kings, and styled their own monarch the Shadow of God.

It might well have seemed probable that despotic government would flourish in Persia indefinitely. But a variety of causes contributed to the weakening of autocratic power. Before the revolution of 1907 there existed, side by side with the authority of the Shah, the rival power of the Mujtahids, or ecclesiastical leaders. The priesthood in Persia has always arrogated to itself 'direct or indirect temporal power, never content to confine its energies to promoting the spiritual welfare of its flock, never subscribing to the maxim, *'ne sutor supra crepidam'*'. Thus there had arisen a system somewhat analogous to that of the Counties Palatine. For example, the city and district of Qum was vested in the guardians of Fatima's shrine, and Mashad was the property of those in charge of the tomb of Imam Riza. The royal governor and the chief Mujtahid shared the revenues of Isfahan.<sup>23</sup> In the name of religion the priests presumed to criticize royal acts, and the ecclesiastical power could frequently dictate Persia's foreign policy. During the revolutionary period the Mujtahids played a deep game. They had their own reasons for wishing the downfall of despotism. On the other hand, they had no intention that Persia should proceed unduly far along the path to modern democracy.

Hence the political upheaval in Persia was much less thorough than in Turkey. Part of the explanation is to be found in the peculiarities of the Shi'ah creed itself. The Sunni system admitted of no change. Therefore it had to be cast aside. But according to Shi'ite belief the Prophet and his book stand on a less lofty pedestal. Reverence for the letter of the Qur'an is tempered by the allegiance due to the series of Imams. To suppose that the Persian political reforms were produced by the evolu-

tion of the Shi'ah creed would savour of exaggeration. The most that can be said is that, spite of its greater hostility towards the infidel, there is a degree of suppleness in the Shi'ah outlook which renders it somewhat less incapable of improvement than the Sunni.

Two other religious influences were encouraging the liberal idea. The first of these was Sufism. The essence of Sufi belief is found in the eclectic spirit which ventures outside the narrow circle of Islam, and gleans truth from many fields. That means a certain measure of independence in thought, and consequently a tendency against absolutism in the State. When Jalaluddin Rumi declared that he had sucked out the marrow from the Qur'an, and cast the bone to the dogs, his daring words revealed a rebel.

Babism and Baha'ism constituted a second awakening force. Clearly the Bab stood forth no less as a political than as a religious leader. He purported to herald a millennium in which the saints, being his own followers, were to rule the world. The circumstance that he commenced his public career in 1844, equivalent to the thousandth Muhammadan year after the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam, lent colour to his claim that he was the Gate, or means of access, between the concealed Imam and mankind. Round periods of time make a remarkable appeal to Musalman imagination. Thus the year 1857, marking the lapse of a century since Plassey, was the obvious date for the Indian Mutiny. The Babis openly avowed their hatred of the Qajar dynasty, and their eagerness to replace it by a better rule.

As for the adherents of Baha' Ullah, they did indeed hold aloof from the Persian constitutional movement. None the less, the general character of their tenets must be held unfavourable to despotism. According to Baha' Ullah, no virtue whatever resided in mere patriotism. Only the large-minded cosmopolitan was to be commended. Deeming his mission a matter of universal, or at least international importance, he addressed letters in the pontifical style to the sovereigns of Europe and Asia. His sneers at the principle of political liberty could hardly nullify the

main drift of his teaching. 'Abbas Effendi, who succeeded him, claimed to be none other than the Messiah. Anxious to conciliate European and especially American opinion, the Effendi gave less and less prominence to Islam in his doctrine, so that the already slender link which connected the Baha'is with the rigid Qur'anic system was still further weakened.<sup>24</sup>

But in the main the Persian revolutionary movement sprang from a desire to imitate the West. The usual crowd of poets, pamphleteers, and newspaper-editors—the inevitable accompaniment of a political crisis in the Orient—repeated for the benefit of Persian readers the sentiments and maxims of a Shelley or a Voltaire, while at the same time they denounced the very nations from whom they were learning the lesson of liberty. Some wanted the revolution to proceed on religious lines, others to jettison religion. Satire directed against the Shah and his court mingled with regrets for the glory of ancient Persia. The correct Western catchwords were duly introduced into the language. A reactionary became technically known as *mustabidd* (exclusive); the Constitution was called *mash-ruta* (the conditioned); the Parliament they termed *majlis* (the sitting). The evil plight of Persia was depicted with the aid of a flowery rhetoric. The ills of Iran, said one writer, could not be cured by Hippocrates or Galen. 'A thousand pities !' cries another, 'May my pen break ! I see pulpit and mosque effaced beneath the feet of the sons of the Fearers (Christians).' A third is more hopeful. 'The star of the Constitution lifts its head from the firmament of perfection. The night of separation draws to its close, and the dawn of union appears.'<sup>25</sup>

The patriotic poems are mostly characterized by complete silence regarding the social evils which Islam has inflicted on Persia, and by a touching faith in representative government as the panacea for every trouble. But there were not wanting observers who could diagnose the case less superficially. A few years earlier Ibrahim Beg, in his Travel Book, had given a vivid yet sane account of the squalor and misery he encountered in a journey through Persia. And the well-written newspaper *Habl-ul-matin*

(the Strong Rope), edited at Calcutta by a Persian refugee, showed that the cause of reform could be advocated without the assistance of hyperbole.

English and French influences, mediated through officials and merchants, also helped. Any collection of native Persian petitions made in the first decade of this century would have revealed traces of the part played by the Belgian officers in charge of the Persian customs, which the Shah mortgaged as security for a State loan in the year 1898, just as in 1873 they had been pledged to Baron Reuter. These revenue-collectors magnified their office, and introduced European methods into the administration. The French which they used for carrying on business—a language dear to Muhammadans—left its mark in such words as *mabl* (meuble) and *tamar* (timbre).

At the outset the revolution followed a remarkably peaceful course. During the crisis of 1906 a large company of Muslim clergy and shopkeepers left Teheran, and took sanctuary at Qum. Another portion of the Persian Liberal party, numbering some 14,000, in spite of their professed detestation of the foreigner, were glad to camp in the grounds of the British Legation, and to enjoy what has been described as the finest picnic the capital ever had. In the same year a parliament was elected, and Persia, copying the American precedent, framed a written Constitution. But the country was still divided against itself, and it seems probable that Russia, if her schemes had not been spoilt by her own internal feuds, would have nipped Persian democracy in the bud. In the course of the Great War the Germans, by spurious professions of Islam, showed how readily the Shi'ahs could be hoodwinked. At the same time, allowance must no doubt be made for the persuasive power of German gold. On the same principle the Bolsheviks later made themselves agreeable by abandoning all claim to the concessions which Persia had previously given to Russia. The province of Azarbaijan was bartered away, and fell under Soviet tyranny.<sup>28</sup>

On the whole, the Persian revolution has been decidedly less radical than the Turkish. One of the chief reasons lies



in the fact that the ecclesiastical leaders of Persia have to a large extent retained their hold on public affairs. It has to be remembered that the Mullahs are something more than priests. They are judges and lawyers, and in general they claim to be arbiters in every kind of dispute. And they act as the brake on the coach of progress. For it would not suit their interests that the rate of advance should be too speedy.

At present Persia, no less than Turkey, is practically governed by a dictator. Riza Shah, who commenced as a gendarme in a regiment of Persian Cossacks, is the counterpart of Mustapha Kamal. The *Majlis* is subservient to his every wish. The party system functions in Persia by means of one party alone. Sovereignty does not yet vest in the people. Hence, notwithstanding the outward show of representative government, Persia cannot be reckoned an exception to the ordinary rule that Muslim communities never attain true democracy.

Still, there is ample evidence that Persia has begun to awake, although the mentality of her inhabitants may not change with such spectacular speed as that of the Turks. Riza Shah, by strengthening the central control at Teheran, has largely overcome the difficulties of desert and distance which paralysed administration under the Qajars. He is, in fact, a more efficient autocrat than any member of that dynasty. For he ensures that his commands are obeyed in even the outlying parts of his kingdom. He was actually so bold as to make the Sheikh of Muhammara a political prisoner in Teheran.<sup>27</sup>

The power behind the throne of Riza Shah is the army, which he has reorganized. In the nineteenth century Persian troops were notorious for being half-fed, half-clothed, and half-paid. That the men themselves had an undoubted aptitude for arms, that under capable leadership they displayed both endurance and cheerfulness, was the opinion of more than one British officer deputed for their training.<sup>28</sup> But the prevailing corruption gave the Persian soldier few chances. Each governor had to recruit annually a fixed number of troops. Local magistrates, to

whom the imperial order descended, perceived the possibilities of the situation. They made it their custom to exempt Mullahs, merchants, and any others who could pay sufficient bribes. As a result, the recruits were usually drawn from the lowest rural class. Sometimes they were sent back for a period to their villages, while the military authorities embezzled their entire pay, instead of a mere portion of it. Soldiers on the march were now and then reduced to eating the grass on the roadside. In return for such treatment they took their duties lightly. Numbers of the men used to engage in trade, and were thus able to make presents to their officers. Discipline slackened. The sleeping sentry was not accounted a very serious offender.<sup>29</sup>

Riza Shah has changed all this, and has made the army an effective instrument for controlling the various tribes, which, resembling the Bedouin in their manner of life, wander up and down the country, and engage in a sort of peripatetic agriculture. By means of his favourite method of securing hostages, the Shah has induced these nomads to agree that the tribal chiefs should be chosen by himself, and that they should become responsible for payment of substantial taxes. The gendarmerie likewise has been remodelled, so that Persian roads are now comparatively safe, and the proverbial sneer will less often be heard: 'There is the gendarme for the robber. But for the gendarme, who is there ?'<sup>30</sup>

The excessive decentralization, which was the curse of Persia in the past, served to facilitate every species of oppression and extortion. Rural administration in the Shi'ah world seems to have been nowise preferable to the methods adopted by the Sunni Turk. The Comte de Gobineau, who was French ambassador at Teheran in 1861-63, has left a vivid account of the way in which Persian taxes were collected. First the Governor sends a Mirza or a soldier to the village. He explains to a meeting of the cultivators why he has come. They grow angry. Blows are given, beards plucked, abuse exchanged. The Governor, as also his messenger, is stigmatized as 'the son of a burnt father', or *pidar sukhta*. At length the parties tire and separate. In the evening a deputation, led by the

village headman, comes to the Government agent, and apologizes. Then the haggling begins, and may continue for a week. Finally the agent states his willingness to accept two-thirds of his original demand. The lion's share of the money is retained by the Governor, only a fraction reaching the State chest. The headman pays nothing. Mullahs and their servants are exempt, as also every family which has a member engaged in military service. Some of the less fortunate peasants would seek safety by fleeing from the village.<sup>31</sup>

Beneath the sceptre of the Pahlavi Shah such abuses are tending to disappear. It is equally true that the evil ways which have prevailed for many centuries cannot be entirely changed in a mere decade. Even to-day, it is said, considerable leakage occurs ere public monies reach their destination.<sup>32</sup> Moreover official Islam, as represented by the Mullahs, continually counsels caution in reform. These priests have been able to point the moral of the recent Afghan revolution, and in the manner of Burke to recommend perseverance in the wisdom of prejudice.

Yet much is already achieved in the matter of social and political progress. By the abolition of the extra-territorial rights formerly enjoyed by Europeans, Persia has got rid of a fancied slur on her self-respect.

Membership of the League of Nations confirms her sense of independence. A syndicate of foreigners has been invited to build a line of railway from the Gulf to the Caspian Sea. Each year two hundred students are being sent to Europe by the State, for the purpose of learning Western methods. Tcheran now boasts a Pasteur Institute, and, to complete the picture, an attempt is being made to enforce the wearing of European dress.<sup>33</sup> The circumstance that in 1928 no public clock was visible in the capital indicates, spite of all innovations, the persistence of the leisurely Muhammadan mode.<sup>34</sup>

In Persia, as in Turkey, some late phenomena betray Christian influence. Two rather striking instances may be mentioned. The Government has taken under its control the cultivation and sale of opium, and by severely restricting the output has forgone considerable revenue.

Islam unaided could never have prompted a measure of this kind. Such moral legislation is surely a piece of unconscious Christianity.

A second example, eloquent of the altering outlook, may be culled from Eastern Persia. Close to the city of Mashad lies a village inhabited by lepers. Now Mashad, as its very name implies (*mashhad*, place of a martyr), is a Persian Canterbury, a centre of pilgrimage and piety. But it would have been rash to conclude that Mashad was likewise a centre of philanthropy. Islam regarded the dead saint as infinitely more important than the living lepers. Hence no organized effort had been made to improve the lot of these unfortunates, until, in 1927, Christian missionaries started medical work among them. The spectacle of foreigners going out of their way for the purpose of ministering to persons afflicted with a horrible disease proved too much for the Persian Governor and his associates, and shamed them into action. They formed a 'Society against Leprosy', and collected large sums of money for furthering the good work. The contributors include even the guardians of the Imam's shrine.<sup>35</sup> Here obviously the impulse came from an outside source. Islam left to itself, would have let the lepers languish. The case is the more remarkable, because the labours of the missionaries seem to have been accepted at their face value. Shi'ahs have usually credited missionaries with low motives, alleging that their sole object was the acquisition of merit for themselves.

The spirit of nationalism has nearly killed Islam in Turkey. And precisely the same process has begun in Persia. Political renaissance brings in its train intellectual and spiritual bewilderment. Persians who think are inclined to doubt whether Islam is a healthy creed for the State. Thence they proceed to wonder if it be a really satisfying religion for the individual soul. Gradually many are realizing the fact that Islam has no answer to most of the questions which human nature is impelled to ask; that it includes life rather than controls it; that in the last resort neither a worthy ideal nor an intelligible motive is offered to the believer.

## CHAPTER V

### AFGHANISTAN

AFGHANISTAN offers another interesting study to the observer of Islam. In some respects the conditions of that country resemble those of Arabia. The pure Afghans, as contrasted with the inhabitants of Mongol or Turkish origin, are believed to exhibit strongly Semitic characteristics, and are perhaps akin to the Hebrews. Like the Arabs, too, the Afghans have their tribal organizations and tribal jealousies. Monarchy in Afghanistan is a sort of accident. The king does not, as among the Persians, count for a divine institution, but rules only so long as he can hold the balance between warring factions. Menaced always by rival claimants to the throne, he cannot afford to forget the proverb which says that ten darweshes may sit on one carpet, but two kings may not exist in one country. Moreover the mountains are to the Afghan what the deserts are to the Arab. Here, then, is a land defended by natural barriers from Western influence, a land where the religion of the Prophet could for ages enjoy free play, 'a blessed land where pigs and Christians cannot live'.

And what has Islam done for Afghanistan? A long series of brilliant generals, from Mahmud of Ghazni to Ahmad Shah Durrani, have led Afghan armies into India, and routed the feeble folk of the plains, and even the Mahrattas, mountaineers like themselves. From time to time there have arisen capable rulers, such as Dost Muhammad or 'Abdur-Rahman, who knew well how to exploit the position of Afghanistan as a buffer State between two European Powers. Yet for the rank and file of the Afghan people Islam has accomplished extremely little. It has done nothing to mitigate the perpetual hostility between tribe and tribe. To the poor and struggling it has brought

neither outward nor inward peace, but has fed them with the husks of superstition and saint-worship, a truly Bar-mecide feast. 'Abdur Rahman (1879-1901) organized a standing army, and set up arms factories, yet made scarcely any attempt to better the tone and condition of the masses.<sup>1</sup> He did indeed admit that he had something to learn from British administration in the Panjab, an admission which failed to bear fruit. Presented with a copy of the New Testament in Pushtu, the Amir replied : 'I shall take great interest in its perusal. I shall, moreover, make extracts of all those passages that correspond with the Qur'an, as well as all such passages as may be interesting and striking, and shall try to act up to them.' The words recall the exclamation of King Agrippa. For the Amir remained a staunch Muslim, and even composed a treatise on the duty of waging the holy war against infidels. His outlook on life may be illustrated by the fact that he consulted astrologers on all points, and would not so much as pare his nails without first ascertaining the auspicious hour.

Fear of the Mullahs has always been a potent force among the minds of the Afghans. These priests instruct pupils in the Qur'an, officiate at marriages and funerals, excommunicate their opponents, incite fanatics, and pose as general champions of the faith. 'A hundred beads on his rosary, a hundred sins in his heart' is the verdict of an Afghan poet. The craze for miracles results in the ready ascription of superhuman powers to Muslim ascetics. Thus the celebrated Akhund of Swat, by dint of fasting and self-denial, acquired so great a reputation that nothing was thought too difficult for him. Popular belief asserted that he could turn stones into gold and silver.<sup>2</sup>

Islam barred the gates of Afghanistan against the Christian missionary. Any evangelizing effort could come only from Peshawar or Quetta. Enquirers were many, but converts extremely few. Those who became Christians had to face the full blast of Muhammadan bigotry, and met with constant abuse and maltreatment, or even with death. When 'Abdul Karim, who suffered martyrdom in 1907, announced himself a Christian, his wife was invited

by her relations to poison her husband, or to stab him in his sleep.<sup>3</sup>

Since the British were the chief Kafir power known to the Afghans, it was against them that the ferocity of the Mullahs mainly turned. During the Great War the Amir Habibullah succeeded in preventing any serious movement on the part of the tribes against India. But with his assassination in 1919, and the enthronement of Amanullah, Afghan policy assumed a different hue. The odd idea took root, that what is good for one Muhammadan country must be feasible and good for any other. Thus the example of Turkey now became the source of political inspiration. All the post-war experiments of the Turks must be repeated in the highlands of Afghanistan. Copying the Ottomans, the new Amir began to lend an ear to the overtures of the Bolsheviks.<sup>4</sup> Therein he evinced the customary confusion of Islamic reasoning. To the Bolshevik all merely national movements and institutions were bourgeois, and hence objectionable. His ideal was a single colourless international scheme, entirely at variance with the brand of patriotism which Amanullah apparently intended to promote. Eventually his passion for imitating things Turkish brought about his downfall.

It was observed by Sir Henry Maine that in the popular mind there is a manifest association of political innovation with scientific advance. The remark applies equally to innovations in the social sphere. Amanullah imagined that reforms which were designed to change the everyday life of his subjects could be imported and set working as easily as motor-cars; and also that the introduction of cars somehow demanded that customs and manners should be assimilated to those of the countries whence the cars had come. Accordingly an attempt was made to inaugurate the programme of social reforms which Turkey had lately flaunted before an astonished world. It was felt that flowing turbans and spacious Pathan trousers sorted ill with the inventions of the twentieth century, and therefore European dress was prescribed. Amanullah had either not studied enough or studied too well the psychology of clothes. Nor had the

largeness of his ideas allowed him to reflect, for instance, that the price of a hat imported from Europe represented a sum sufficient to clothe an ordinary Afghan peasant for a whole winter.

Further, the Amir had reckoned without the Mullahs. In fact some of his measures seemed to be deliberately aimed against their authority, as when he proposed to ban every official who placed himself under a Mullah's guidance. The discarding of the veil, and the plan for sending Afghan girls to be educated in Europe, were novelties that could be acceptable only on the hypothesis that Afghanistan, like Turkey, had ceased to be a Muhammadan country. Quickly the priests rallied the conservative forces of religion, and demonstrated very clearly that the choice lies, as ever, between Islam and progress. So Amanullah was compelled to pay dearly for his superficial and mistimed modernism.

His successor, King Nadir, has wisely restored the privileges of the priests, while yet he endeavours with caution to transform Afghanistan into the semblance of a Western democracy. It is significant, however, that the triumph of the Mullahs has resulted in the defeat of the two cardinal reforms, which are essential before the country can be termed truly civilized and progressive. The feminine veil has come back, and likewise the old system of religious law, which sets a veil upon the heart and mind. The King is said to impose his own will on the Grand Assembly. And the fact that the most important offices of State are in the hands of his brothers may betoken a government representative of the monarch rather than of his subjects.<sup>5</sup>



## CHAPTER VI

### ISLAM IN EGYPT

EGYPT, on the other hand, has been content to modernize herself by slower stages. In 1798 Napoleon, after defeating the Mamluks, promised to deliver Egypt from the Turkish yoke. The Emperor showed himself a friend of Islam in his scrupulous respect for mosques, and his house at Cairo was thronged by Qadis and Muftis.<sup>1</sup> His offer met with a cold response, since the religious conservatism of the Egyptians was stronger than any desire they might possess for a just government. But the close and constant contact with Europe which the physical situation of the country rendered inevitable could not fail to produce political results. The beginning of nationalism is usually associated with the name of Muhammad 'Ali. His aim was rather to give Egypt a definite status in the eyes of Europe. The measures he took to make Egypt something like a modern State had no particular spiritual significance. They may be sufficiently explained by his own personal ambition. Muhammad 'Ali had great aspirations, and dreamed of becoming head of the whole Turkish Empire. The extent to which he was a genuine nationalist can be gauged from the fact that he governed chiefly through foreign officials, and surrounded himself with a crowd of French experts.<sup>2</sup> It is unlikely that zeal for Islam occupied any prominent place in the list of his motives.

Subsequently the craze for imitation brought Egypt to disaster. To copy Western methods by executing huge public works, and introducing royal pomp at court, was a comparatively simple matter. But these luxuries were not to be had for nothing. Hence it became necessary to copy the West once more, and to raise international loans. Now Muhammad, according to a typical tradition, cursed the

receiver of interest, the payer of interest, the clerk who writes the bond, and the two witnesses thereof.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, however, to the Egyptian mind it appeared less criminal to borrow from Kafir peoples. At all events, Egypt sank ever deeper into debt, and the prospect of the creditors recovering either principal or interest grew fainter and fainter. Islam commonly inclines to emphasise the privileges rather than the responsibilities of her followers, especially in dealings with non-Muslims. Under the Khadiv Isma'il Pasha the national debt of Egypt rose from three to a hundred million sterling. When the foreign creditors asserted their rights, and England intervened in order to clear up the financial muddle, probably not a few wise-acres reflected that all the trouble had arisen through setting at naught the clear command of the Prophet.

Nor, again, does Islam urge gratitude towards the Kafir for benefits received. So that it would have been a matter for surprise, if there had been much generous recognition of the work accomplished during the British occupation. Meredith Townsend, writing in 1903, observed that it was as useless to tell an Egyptian of the prosperity brought by Europeans as to tell an Irish Nationalist the same thing about the English. 'He does not trouble himself to deny the facts, nay, very often believes them ; but, all the same, he wants the intruders gone, if wealth and comfort go with them.'<sup>4</sup>

Still, he gave some help to the intruders during the European War, and the Egyptian Labour Battalions contributed materially to the success of British arms in the Palestine campaign. Then came a period in which Egypt was deeply influenced by the world-wide restlessness and impatience. Scarcely was the ink dry on the Armistice when Zaghlul Pasha renewed his agitation, and after four years of intrigue, rioting, passive resistance, and murders called political, the British Parliament, itself doubtless infected with the prevalent war-weariness, ended the Protectorate. At last Egypt was a sovereign State, complete with King, Cabinet, and Parliament.

The tattered cloak does not make the darwesh. Nor

do polling-booths make a democracy. While it was not to be expected, that capacity for administration could be picked up in the course of a decade, or that the exotic plant of representative government, so sedulously encouraged with imported manure, should blossom into sudden glory, yet at least two signs have appeared, which show how the new State is likely to fare. First, there is an inadequate conception of the meaning of public life and public service. So long as politicians had no burden on their shoulders, they could glibly exclaim, 'Egypt for the Egyptians!' But when they obtained power, it was too often observed that they were chiefly anxious to recoup themselves for their election expenses, and to provide posts for their friends and relations. Secondly, the spirit of party began to exceed all bounds. This failing, it is true, characterizes more than one European Parliament, although hardly in the same degree. Without some amount of compromise the party system cannot be worked. Accordingly the Constitution launched in 1923 broke down in 1928, and the Egyptian Parliament was suspended for three years.

Nobody will pretend that the recent political and social changes in Egypt were inspired by Islam. The written Constitution professes to ensure religious freedom for all—a provision entirely abhorrent from the doctrine of the Qur'an. In the struggle for independence the idea of Allah faded into the background. The nation itself became the presiding deity. Although Egypt did not follow the Turks so far as to disestablish Islam, the reforms were essentially the achievement of free-thinkers and modernists. But lately the official leaders of the Muhammadan faith have been active in two directions. They are endeavouring, in spite of the Constitution, to restrict the liberty assigned to other creeds. And they are taking steps to resist the disintegrating influences within their own camp.

The civil courts aid this reaction by a strict application of that outworn code, the Shari'a, which embodies much of Muslim bigotry. Thereby it is rendered impossible for those who abandon Islam in favour of Christianity to

secure their personal rights. As the law now stands in Egypt, an unmarried woman who turns Christian may be forcibly restored to her Muslim parents, who can then insist on her marrying a Muslim husband.<sup>5</sup> Thus the executive power says one thing, and the judicial power something substantially different. The Constitution lays down liberty of conscience as one of its fundamental axioms; whereas the courts coerce and penalize those whose conscience causes them to quit the Muhammadan fold. Evidently the admiration of the Egyptians for free institutions is not yet comprehensive enough to embrace such enactments as Magna Charta and the Habeas Corpus Act. Moreover, where a particular personal right depends on a clause inserted in the Constitution, there lurks always the suggestion that the right may be modified or suspended. The privilege, whether it concerns liberty of body or of conscience, is bound in such a case to be more precarious than where, as in England, it rests upon the ordinary law. The circumstance that the Constitution of Egypt is in this important respect nullified by the action of the courts is either an instance of the inability to perceive contradiction, or else a scheme to frighten the would-be convert away from his purpose.

Hostility to missions is growing, as Islam in Egypt becomes once more her intolerant self. Thus a Society for opposing Evangelistic Work has been founded, and a vigorous campaign with the same object is being carried on in the press. Some seriously propose that all preaching should be stopped, Christian literature suppressed, and all lectures subjected to censorship before delivery. Another sign of the times may be seen in the growing coolness of Muslims towards the Copts, and official discrimination against Christians in government service.<sup>6</sup> In face of these tendencies, it cannot be believed that Islam is disposed towards equitable treatment of the large Christian population of Cairo, Alexandria, and other Egyptian cities.

Parallel with the fight against militant Christianity a great effort is in progress to maintain orthodoxy among the faithful. The earlier Egyptian modernism, indeed,

which was in vogue during the latter half of the nineteenth century, claimed before everything to be truly orthodox. The Salafiya school (*salaf*, he preceded) had something in common with the Wahabis, and raised the cry, 'Back to the Qur'an !' But their motto was less simple than it sounded. In the Qur'an and the authentic traditions (as if anyone could decide which are authentic), they professed to discover, at least in embryo, every modern theory and invention. Thus the evil eye stands for magnetic rays. The Jinn are armies of microbes, and lightning in the Qur'an designates electricity. It would seem far saner to suppose that the prophet Nahum (ii, 4), speaking of chariots that 'shall run like the lightnings', foretold the advent of the motor-car. The Salafiya, moreover, in the manner of the Ahmadiya edition of the Qur'an, essayed to prove that the book anticipates Darwin's theory of evolution ; and by an amazing quibble they managed to show that in Islam polygamy is unlawful. They appealed to the phrase *Sunnat Ullah*, in the Qur'an (33.62), as indicating that God is said to unfold Himself through human history. But the verse in question actually says : 'Thou shalt not find any change in the course of Allah.' Such words appear to deny, rather than assert, a progressive revelation. Equally fanciful, if more rational, was the distinction which certain modernists tried to make between the universal commands of the Qur'an and those of merely particular or temporary significance.<sup>7</sup> A cynic might hint that, if every precept relevant only to Arabia and to an infant civilization should be excised, the remainder would be small.

One special aim of the Salafiya is to purge Islam of superstitious practices. Among these they include the festive celebration of Muhammad's birthday.<sup>8</sup> Here it is instructive to observe that Goldziher, commenting on the change of official attitude, whereby the festival is now approved on the principle of *ijma'*, remarks how the religious guides of Islam keep pace with altering times and conditions.<sup>9</sup> In the Muhammadan world it is frequently difficult to decide who is a purist, and who a modernist.

More dangerous to the citadel of conservatism was the

attack made by Sheikh 'Ali 'Abdur Raziq, in his 'Essay on the Khalifat and the Principles of Government', which was published at Cairo in 1925. He argues that the Khalif possessed only temporal authority; that Muhammad could not transmit his power; and that the Khalifat has no religious basis whatever. Accordingly nothing hinders the Muhammadan peoples from abolishing an obsolete institution, and adopting a system of government in harmony with modern methods. The same writer considers that the enforcing of the Shari'a by the courts is inconsistent with the aims of the Prophet, who intended a purely spiritual kingdom, rather than a legal code administered through the civil power.

It was a little late in the day, especially in Sunni circles, to tilt at these time-honoured bulwarks of Islam. Nor is it surprising that the Sheikh's theories were condemned by the university of Al Azhar.<sup>10</sup> Egyptian opinion on the Khalifat, while condemning the iconoclastic Turk, was by no means unanimous. Some suggested that a new Khalif should be chosen by the '*ulama*. Others declared that the Khalif must be backed by political authority, and that therefore the office should be bestowed on the leading Muslim prince. At the Egyptian Congress, which met in 1926 for the purpose of settling the question, no representative appeared from India, Turkey, Persia, or Afghanistan—a striking proof of the absence of solidarity in the Muslim world. Enthusiasm for the ideal of Pan-Islam was dead. Nationality stood before everything. So the Congress came to naught, and Islam stayed headless. At the present time, whether in Egypt or elsewhere, there is no indication of widespread alarm about this extraordinary state of Islamic affairs. But perhaps, in these days, even Europe would refuse to be convulsed by the ending of the Papacy.

Considerably more concern is felt when doubt begins to be cast on the verbal inspiration of the Qur'an. Far-fetched interpretation of texts may be evidence of mere perversity. But to deny their accuracy, as statements of fact, is an unpardonable offence. A notable example recently occurred. A professor in the new University of

Cairo published a book, in the course of which he insinuated that the story of Abraham and Ishmael was not historical truth. This resulted in such an outburst of public indignation that the professor was obliged to withdraw the book from circulation, and to put forth a fresh edition from which the improper passages had been expunged.<sup>11</sup> Since the Qur'an includes so many errors and anachronisms, there is obviously a very wide field open to criticism. The pundits of Islam, however, have always discouraged any adventures in this direction, and endeavoured to maintain that intellectual independence in the treatment of the Qur'an amounts almost to blasphemy. They ignore or despise the mass of scholarship and research which in the past fifty years has been brought to bear on the Old Testament, calmly forgetting that a great part of it applies with double force to their own holy book. Hence no really critical commentary on the Qur'an has yet appeared. Nor can the impression be resisted, that Islam, as represented by the *'ulama*, believes her cause is likely to suffer if the foundations of her creed are fearlessly explored. The tangible volume itself is invested with a kind of taboo, and when it is not actually being read must be kept covered in a cloth, the more gorgeous the better. In the same spirit also it is accounted an impiety to translate the Qur'an into a foreign tongue; albeit nobody cares to protest when extracts from the book are ignobly used as charms and talismans. Not long ago the Egyptian authorities were induced by Al Azhar to prohibit the importation of certain commentaries on the Qur'an, and likewise translations such as Rodwell's.<sup>12</sup> A Young Men's Muslim Association has been formed for the purpose of shielding the faith against the direct assaults of the Christian missions and the flank attacks made by modernists.

## CHAPTER VII

### NORTH AND CENTRAL AFRICA

IN other portions of Africa Islam triumphed less completely than in Egypt. The Berber race is believed to contain no Semitic element, and the remarkable proportion of blondes to be found even at the present time in Morocco corroborates the theory that the Berbers are ethnically related to a Northern European stock. As Mommsen has observed, the Berbers were willing to obey their masters, whether Vandals, Arabs, or French, but showed little desire for closer intercourse.<sup>1</sup> They remained incorrigible nomads. Masinissa, the friend of Rome, might induce a fraction of the Berbers to accept some semblance of settled government. But to continue sedentary was not in their nature.

Born dissenters, they have shown themselves eager to embrace any heresy that flattered their sense of independence. As Christians, they must needs enlist under the banner of Arius, then of Donatus. And when the Roman province of Africa is gibbeted by Juvenal as '*nutricula causicorum*', we may perchance discern in his description a trace of the Berber fondness for argument and controversy—that fatal trait which was to compass the ruin of the North African Church.

As Muslims—if such they can be truly termed—the Berbers still clung to their dislike of the ordinary and the orthodox. The tyranny of 'Ubed Ullah, who was appointed Governor of Africa in the year 734, and the open contempt displayed by the Arabs for an alien race, confirmed the Berbers in their inclination towards Kharijite opinions. They themselves had been plundered by men who professed to be their co-religionists; and their brethren, by whose assistance Spain had been won for the Khalif, were shabbily rewarded with the worst lands in the peninsula.



How refreshing, then, for the Berber to learn that according to one sect of Islam, a Berber was as good as an Arab, and might equally aspire to become Khalif! The levelling and democratic doctrine of the Kharijites exactly suited their case.

Yet the Muhammadanism of the Berbers was never more than skin deep. They insisted on attaching themselves to persons rather than ideas. Islam could not offer them a truly personal God. As a result, the Berbers became the most inveterate of saint-worshippers. Tertullian states that the people of Mauretania were accustomed to deify their princelets.<sup>2</sup> When the Berbers adopted Islam, the holy men, or Marabouts (*murabit*, devotee), took the place of the fetish gods, and were not merely revered, but actually worshipped. It was the Marabouts who dictated the policy and aroused the martial zeal of their credulous followers. Whenever they pleased, they could incite the Berbers to rebel against the Arabs, and by their intrigues the dynasties of the Almoravids (*al murabitun*) and the Almohads (*al murwahhidun*, believers in the unity of God) were successively established. The jugglery of the Marabouts passed for magic, and a simulated frenzy paraded itself as religious ecstasy. The Marabouts were at once priests, prophets, and saints. It was nobody's business to correct the doctrinal mistakes of the Berbers. The Christian method of evangelizing in a heathen land has generally commenced with the sending of professional missionaries, who might ensure that the foundations for a later indigenous Church were well and truly laid. Islam merely counted heads. Provided her dogma was repeated and her ritual observed, she hardly cared what pagan fancies were retained. Whether the converts took a really spiritual view of their new faith was a matter of indifference, if only they accepted the outward system.

Thus Islam effected no profound change in the outlook of the Berbers. Those who tried their fortunes in Spain came under other influences, Jewish and Christian. But in North Africa the Berbers quickly resumed their old modes of living and thinking. Islam did not cause them to emerge

from their original tribalism, and their subsequent history is but the record of rival tribes struggling for transient supremacy. The Sultans, perpetually fighting, had no time to organize.

It was the same with ethics. The Qur'an, even if the Berbers could hammer a meaning out of its difficult Arabic, made no material difference to their morality. Nor did they often avail themselves of the permission for polygamy. Down to the present day the Berbers have remained under the dominion of the Marabouts. In a description of Tripoli at the close of the eighteenth century there occur vivid pictures of the arrogance and pretensions of this priestly caste. For instance, a Marabout is given drink, and forthwith breaks the cup, which his very touch has rendered too holy for the use of common men. They play the part of lordly mendicants—no mere beggars of the street, to be put off with the usual Arabic phrase, 'Allah will provide for thee'—but bold and swaggering, as befits those who carry effectual blessings and curses in their scrips. 'On their first arrival at any town or market-place they immediately proceed to the centre of it, and getting upon some conspicuous place, call out with violence for a sum of money, or a quantity of corn, barley, meat, or fruit, without ceasing, till the people come in numbers, bringing what they can collect.'<sup>3</sup>

In Morocco the Berbers have passed on to the Jews their own awe of the Marabout. Tombs of selected Rabbis are supposed to possess miraculous powers, and regular pilgrimages are made to them.<sup>4</sup> For the influence of the Marabout is enhanced at his death. The Moroccan girl who drinks water from the shrines of seven saints is believed to grow so beautiful that she will speedily win a husband. Among the Andjra tribe, on the southern shore of the Straits of Gibraltar, the bride, accompanied by her husband's brother, must visit the patron saint of the village, and address him thus: 'I am of the guests of Allah, and of your guests, oh my lord the saint.' Thereupon the brother-in-law kills a cock by way of sacrifice to the saint.<sup>5</sup>

Even in Fez, notwithstanding the influence of time and the French, the hand of the dead saint loses nothing of its ancient power. Every Fasi in difficulty resorts to the shrine of Mulai Idris. It is the chief Moroccan sanctuary, and affords shelter to all kinds of criminals and debtors, providing them not only with legal protection, but also with board and lodging. Fez would deem it an unspeakable outrage if the sanctuary were violated. But since the right of asylum has always been liable to abuse, an arrangement exists whereby the local tribunal can assert its claim to deal with the worst of the fugitives. When the accused person is required to attend the court, he takes with him a piece of wood, inscribed with verses of the Qur'an, which is supposed to have belonged to the saint. Armed with this relic, he is reckoned as still protected by the sanctuary.<sup>6</sup>

These and other Moroccan survivals of a primitive age appear to rest ultimately on the basis of dread. In the case of sanctuary the fear of offending the shade of the saint is more potent than the desire that justice should be done. The Moors are haunted by the belief that certain favoured individuals have the power to bless (*baraka*), and such benedictions are to them far more real and valuable than any to be expected from a shadowy Allah. The same idea lies at the root of that characteristic institution, the Makhzan, or governing council chosen from the dominant tribes. For the authority of the Makhzan is bound up with religious prestige, and the Sultan is one whose *baraka* has the pre-eminence.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, most of the people are members of one or other of the religious fraternities, and gladly buy blessings from the descendants of the Marabouts. However, their deviations from the narrow way of Islam seldom serve to widen their horizon or abate their spiritual pride. Vainly may the idea of toleration be sought in a country where the children learn to sing: 'The Sheikh of the Christians to the needle; the Sheikh of the Jews to the spit; our Sheikh to the garden of paradise!'<sup>8</sup>

Through the Berbers Islam filtered into the Sahara and the valley of the Niger. There the dusky population

was still more irrevocably wedded to the practice of animism, and their adopted faith was what a French writer terms 'un islamisme de façade'. Religion was abridged, just as Arabic was clipped (*blad* for *balad*, *krim* for *karim*). To some extent the prospect of obtaining new political rights attracted the negroes towards Islam. In 1923, for example, the Muhammadans of Dahomey claimed to be judged by their religious equals, instead of being ranked with idolaters.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the history of Porto Novo, the capital of Dahomey, during the past hundred years furnishes an interesting example of the way in which Islam accommodates itself to paganism, and incidentally of the view of Islam taken by those who remain loyal to animism. At Porto Novo an amazing custom prevails. The fetishist kings appoint not only the political, but the religious heads of the Musalman community. Each Imam and his deputy thus owe their positions to persons who in theory are among the most degraded of Kafirs. In 1912 the heathen king laid the foundation-stone of a mosque.<sup>10</sup> No doubt his notion was to propitiate the Muslim fetish. Incidents like these tend to show that Islam is not regarded in Dahomey as an elevating creed, but rather as merely a new variant among the medley of animistic beliefs and usages. The Marabout comes to be looked upon as very similar to the pagan priest. In the Sahara he works wonders. It is related that a certain Marabout, Sidi bin Sassi, having given shelter to three fugitives, delivered them up to their pursuers, whom he bound by an oath not to harm the prisoners. False to their word, the captors slew the three men before the eyes of the saint. Thereupon he, like a modern Circe, changed the assassins into women. Only after abject apologies and many gifts did the Marabout deign to remove the spell.<sup>11</sup>

The fondness for eclecticism, natural enough among barbarous folk assailed by many religious cross-currents, may be further instanced by the case of the Saharan nomads known as Tuaregs. Although they are Muslims, a section of the men wear silver crosses about their necks, and display the same emblem on the pommels of their saddles.

Possibly the use of the cross points back to a remote past, in which the Tuareg were Christians.<sup>12</sup> The very name Tuareg is perhaps derived from the Arabic *tarak* (he abandoned), and may stamp them as deserters from the Christian ranks. The fact remains that the Tuareg see nothing incongruous in adopting a symbol which Islam teaches them to hate. Lax in observance of Muhammadan ritual, they doubtless view their crosses in the light of amulets.<sup>13</sup>

Religious societies with a political bias attract the African Muslim, and flatter his desire to be different. An appeal to his emotions is made by the Qadariya heresy, which originated in a protest of the champions of free will (*qadar*, he was able) against the determinists. Initiation into the sect is effected by the bestowal of a rosary, and through telling the beads the novitiate learns to induce in himself an ecstasy like that of the Sufis. One mysterious result of this pious exercise is to render the Qadariya hostile to French influence.<sup>14</sup>

Still more bitterly opposed to the foreigner is the fraternity of the Senussis. They represent an interesting modern movement, started by an Algerian Sheikh, who died in 1859. The object of the Senusiya is to build up a Central African State, composed of genuine Muslims. In one aspect the fraternity stands for a reaction against the superficial and easy-going form of Islam which contents the majority of African believers. Members must abjure singing and dancing, tobacco, snuff and coffee. Each Senussi is required to surrender himself absolutely to the Sheikh's control, resigned and unresisting as a corpse in the hands of those who wash the dead. But this discipline, no less than that of Templar or Jesuit, aims at a special object. For the Senusiya is, in fact, an attempt to fan into flame the dying embers of Pan-Islam, and to revive the Imamatus. At first the Senussis sought to avoid all intercourse with non-Muslims by isolating themselves in the remoteness of the desert.<sup>15</sup> In the Great War they pursued a more active policy, and gave trouble to the Allies in Tripoli and Egypt. Beaten by European artillery,

they turned their attention to Turkey. Apparently they, or at least their chiefs, were quite willing to sail with any breeze that offered. Thus the Senussis transferred their affection to the Pan-Turanian ideal. This proved their undoing. Turkey gave only a lukewarm reception to the envoys of the black theocracy, while other African sects, already jealous of the Senussis, were yet more estranged by the negotiations with the dictator of Angora.<sup>16</sup>

It is doubtful if the Senusiya, and other kindred orders in Central Africa, can claim to represent genuine religious movements. How should the native of the Sahara, still pagan at heart, still dividing his allegiance between saints and demons, care greatly about the finer points of Muhammadan belief? They would mean as little to him as the niceties of the Arian dispute meant to the average Visigoth. No doubt the African nomad counts one battle-cry equal to another. War and hate are congenial to him. Islam shows him one more thing to hate, namely Christianity, and encourages him to resist by force the advance of the European.

During the last decade a different type of Islamic world-movement has been pushing its way inland from the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. The Ahmadiya, though bitterly anti-Christian, officially counsels peace and toleration.<sup>17</sup> Based on an alleged incarnation of Deity, this is the kind of sect which might have been expected to spring from a Persian source. Actually, India is its parent. As a general rule, Indian Muslims have favoured the conservative line, and have been more disposed to follow the by-ways explored by foreign thinkers than to make new paths for themselves. But maybe the standing example of the Hindu Avatars constituted a challenge to the rival faith. If Siva could walk the earth in visible form, why should not Allah do likewise?

Accordingly Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a Panjabi, stepped forth, and claimed to be not only Messiah and Mahdi, but also an Avatar. His inconsistencies were many and curious. In spite of the fact that Ahmad was his father's name, not his own, the Mirza presumed, like the Prophet,

to identify himself with the Paraclete. A further obstacle in his way was the Muhammadan theory, as set forth in the Qur'an (4.156) that Jesus was never crucified, but was caught up to heaven at the moment when the Jews were planning His death. Ghulam Ahmad, rejecting this Doce-tist teaching, declared he had discovered the tomb of Jesus at Srinagar, in Kashmir. He had recourse to the 'swoon theory', and explained that after the Crucifixion Jesus had recovered from His wounds and travelled to India.<sup>18</sup> Although his doctrine and claims diverged so far from the Qur'an, Ghulam Ahmad gave himself out as a convinced Muslim, and enjoined on his followers all the practices prescribed by Muhammad. To liberal tendencies he professed to be utterly opposed.<sup>19</sup>

Nothing could be more characteristic of Muslim sects than the sequel to Mirza's death, which occurred in 1908. The Ahmadiya split into two camps, precisely as the Babis had done before them. The Lahore branch, being the more active, resolved to see what might be achieved in the direction of commending Islam to the Western world. Clearly the ship of faith was burdened with excessive ballast. So the Ahmadiya jettisoned the Sunnat. The Qur'an was to be the sole guide—as translated and annotated by the editor.

The English edition, published in 1916, is the work of a modernist, who is yet more than half a bigot. It provides a notable example of Muhammadan ethics and psychology. The first aim of the Ahmadiya version is to smooth down the angularities of the text, and to gloss over or explain away whatever offends either moral or common sense. Secondly, the editor takes great pains to demonstrate the surpassing excellence of Islam. Thirdly, he tries to show the inferiority of the religion of Christ.

Far from apologising for any action of Muhammad, he describes him in the Preface as one 'whose varied earthly experiences furnish the best rules of conduct in all the different phases of human life.' In dealing with the Haj, the heathenish ritual is taken to represent 'the last stage in spiritual advancement.' The pilgrim dress (*ihram*)

signifies the absolute equality of all Muslims, and the editor challenges the whole world to present another such noble picture of real brotherhood.<sup>20</sup>

The Ahmadiya editor, moreover, recoils from the idea that there can have been any change in the composition of the Qur'an. But he is faced with the well-known passage in Sura 2.106. He tries to overcome the obstacle by asserting: 'The reference here is to the abrogation of the Jewish law.' Now the Arabic words would naturally mean: 'whatever we cancel of the verses'. Both Sale and Rodwell take the words in the same sense. The editor, on the other hand, quite arbitrarily assumes that *ayat* (the ordinary word for a verse of the Qur'an) refers to the Jewish law. In the case of the parallel passage, Sura 16.101, where the context is yet more decidedly in favour of the usual interpretation, the editor uses a different argument. This is a Meccan Sura. While the Prophet was at Mecca, there was no need of abrogation. Therefore the passage in question cannot refer to abrogation of verses in the Qur'an. Such fanciful reasoning does violence to the sacred text. The verse plainly shows that some of Muhammad's contemporaries accused him of forgery, on the ground that he had changed certain verses. The mass of Muslim commentators admit that a number of verses have been abrogated.

Again, when the Qur'an (9.5) conveys the command, 'Slay the idolaters wherever you find them', the editor states that 'idolaters' include only particular Arab tribes, who had broken their agreements with the Muslims. But the word *mushrikin* denotes all those who join other deities with Allah—chiefly, of course, the Christians.

The Ahmadiya is determined at all costs to clear the character of the Prophet. In the note on Qur'an 33.37 his marriage with the divorced wife of Zaid is declared to be justified by the fact that Zenab was daughter of Muhammad's aunt, and that her marriage with Zaid had proved unhappy. The behaviour of Muhammad with regard to Mary the Copt is similarly defended in the commentary on Qur'an 66.1. First the editor suggests that Mary ranked on the same level as the wives of the Prophet.



Finally he gives it as his opinion that the verse relates, not to the affair of Mary, but to Muhammad's temporary separation from his wives. It is not explained why in the next verse Muhammad is granted release from his oaths or why this dispensation, which is put in the second person plural, should not apply to Musalmans in general.

Sometimes the Ahmadiya edition displays a forlorn ingenuity in the effort to establish the accuracy of the Qur'an in statements of fact. The description of the Virgin Mary as the sister of Aaron (Qur'an 19.28), we are told, is merely equivalent to saying that she belonged to the priestly class. Again, the Qur'an (9.30) ascribes to the Jews the assertion that Ezra is the Son of Allah. The editor seeks to defend this libel on the Jews by two inconsistent arguments. Either a sect of the Jews, as Muslim historians aver, raised Ezra to the dignity of godhead, or else the phrase *ibn Ullah* means no more than the special favourite of Allah.

Throughout the comments may be seen the conviction that in the end Islam must inevitably triumph over every other religion. Whatever is good among Christian nations to-day is set down to their unconscious acceptance of Muhammadan principles. In explaining Sura 9.33, the editor declares that 'the doctrine of atonement, and that of the Divinity of Jesus Christ, are dying a natural death, and Monotheism is daily gaining ground, while other principles of Islam are equally advancing day by day'. Muhammad, the editor thinks, is the only prophet sent, not to a particular people, but to the whole of mankind. 'We have not sent thee but as a mercy to the worlds' (Qur'an 21.107).

Aristotle condemns the man who aims at defending a thesis through thick and thin. The Ahmadiya editor, in his eagerness to make out the best case for Islam, is led into all kinds of far-fetched explanations, special pleading, and odd devices for the purpose of supporting his theory. He proposed for himself the impossible task of showing seventh-century Arabs as conforming to Western ethical standards of the present time. Evolution, as a guide to history, he apparently rejects. Yet in the matter of physical

evolution he represents the Qur'an as forestalling Darwin. Sura 81.14 innocently states : 'And indeed He created you variously', or 'in ways' (*atwaran*). The Ahmadiya unwarrantably translates this last word 'through various grades'. No wonder that this strange version of the Qur'an has been condemned by the 'ulama of the University of Al Azhar.<sup>21</sup>

A grim competition between the Cross and the Crescent now proceeds in Africa. The Crescent is gaining fast. It is estimated that in Negro Africa ten heathen turn Muslim for every one that turns Christian.<sup>22</sup> Sierra Leone, which less than half a century ago contained no adherent of the Prophet, has to-day a large Muslim population. The reasons for this success, which no Christian can believe to be permanent, are fairly obvious. Islam has far the larger number of missionaries, since most Muhammadans consider themselves charged with a mission to spread their faith. Unlike many Christians, they are not ashamed to speak up for what they believe. Why, indeed, should they be timid, when they are so certain that they alone possess the jewelled key to life ? So wherever trade penetrates Africa, Islam comes with it. The Muslim merchant carries in his pack both material and spiritual wares. And when he does a deal with the heathen, he improves the occasion by a little quiet proselytising. Muslim officials also, from the highest to the lowest, are constantly grasping their opportunities for religious propaganda. These men hold all the advantage of the non-professional missionary, and it is hardly surprising if their appeal often comes with greater force than that of the Christian preacher who lives by the Gospel.

Again, Islam is the least complex of world-religions. Christians, it has been said, are made, not born. A Muslim is made in a moment. Let the pagan so much as repeat the Kalima—'No God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah'—and immediately, as if by the wave of a magic wand, he is a Muhammadan. It is the recital rather than the belief that really matters. The convert is not called upon to undergo a tedious period of probation,

for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent his new faith has taken root. He can readily understand, or imagine he understands, the bald statement of monotheism. He need not make the effort of mind which is involved in comprehending such truths as those of the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection. He has no time to wait upon a thought. Later he may become a Sectarian. But in the first instance Islam approaches him with a united front, or at least not so manifestly divided as Christianity into communities jealous of each other. Only one version of the Qur'an is offered to the negro, nor is he confused with conflicting theories about its origin or its value. A form of religion which is simple, even with the simplicity of the shallow, easily commends itself to an unschooled race.

Islam demands little from the African, and offers him much. It leaves him his wives, even if it forbids him wine—a more attractive proposition than the converse course presented by Christianity. Herein the Prophet appears as a master caterer for the weakness of human nature, which amid the very pursuit of virtue insists on clinging to its favourite vices. A kind of prescience enabled him to excel in the art of 'thinking black'. His system compounds with human passions, instead of sublimating them. In return for saying a formula and obeying some laws of ritual, the negro receives solid benefits. At once he becomes a member of a great religious club, and, like the man who began work in the vineyard at the eleventh hour, he may claim equality with the scions of Islam's noblest families. If he was a slave, he wins his freedom. From that seemingly fortunate hour in which the convert enters the august Muhammadan commonwealth, all its privilege and protection are his. In the present stage of the negro's development, Islam proffers something which exactly suits him. She does not attempt to interrupt his narrow tribal life, or to obtrude upon his attention an ideal which might render his conscience uncomfortable. Finally, she promises with no faltering voice the sort of paradise which he will appreciate.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ISLAM AND THE LEGAL MIND

WHAT is the effect of Islam on law ? It will be retorted that Muhammadan law is part and parcel of the religion, or only a particular phase of it. Nobody can say precisely where religion ends and where law begins, or how much of the legal appendix may rank among the fundamental tenets of Islam. The Muslim views life like a lawyer. He is haunted with the distinction between the lawful (*halal*) and the forbidden (*haram*). The sphere of law in Islam is indefinitely wide. The law is a huge net, which enmeshes all the relations and duties of everyday existence. 'De minimis non curat lex' was never written of Islamic law, which descends, with no abatement of dignity, to the most trivial of details. Hence a glance at the principles and the development of law is essential for the understanding of Muhammadan thought and outlook.

Nor must we marvel at the Muslim's enormous reverence for his law. To start with, he has a divine volume, which bids him to enquire between its covers for commands and guidance on whatever point of conduct may arise. The Qur'an (16.89) says : 'We have sent down to you the book clearly explaining everything'. So there lurks in the mind of the Muslim a conviction that ultimately he possesses in the book a divine clue to the unravelling of all problems. The Qur'an purports to act as a judge and divider. For example, the fourth Sura lays down the law of inheritance, stating exactly what share of the property each relative must receive.

But as Islam conquered and expanded, innumerable cases occurred in which the Qur'an, by reason of the vague and general character of many of its precepts, afforded no help. Hence, recourse was had to the reported sayings of

Muhammad not included in the book. He himself had claimed divine inspiration only for the Suras. But the common tendency to regard the Prophet as a pattern of life and manners resulted in placing on a level with the Qur'an every chance remark that could with any show of probability be ascribed to him. The degree of authenticity attaching to the average *hadith* may be estimated from the fact that Al Bukhari, after reviewing more than half a million of these traditions, could arrive at barely 3,000 genuine and distinct sayings of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> Even of this residue, few would perhaps withstand the searchlight of modern historical criticism. The following *hadith*, though classed among the authentic, bears the stamp of an after-thought: 'Does anyone of you suppose that Allah has not forbidden anything but what is contained in this Qur'an? Verily, by Allah, that which I have commanded, admonished, and forbidden, is like unto the Qur'an, and more than it'.<sup>2</sup> Possibly, in a grandiose moment, Muhammad uttered words like these, which stand in flagrant contradiction to his general attitude. At all events, they served well the purpose of the lawyer.

The Prophet, at least in theory, is the sole legislator, as being the recipient of a special revelation. The Sunna, or traditional practice, is based on obedience to him. He is reported to have said: 'He who loves not my Sunna is not my follower'.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Qur'an and the Sunna together form the main authority for law. And from the circumstance that the great majority of Musalmans rejoice to call themselves Sunnis the prestige of the traditions may be inferred. If we could picture England as subject only to a code of Canon Law, the position would be somewhat analogous.

Within three centuries of the Flight of Muhammad the Sunna became practically stereotyped. The four orthodox schools of law differ mainly in the degrees of their conservatism. From their time onwards the path is closed to independent private judgment (*ijtihad*) regarding the application of the Qur'an and the Sunna. The historian Ibn Khaldun observes that the opinion of an Imam does

idea of making all slaughter of animals sacrificial, might appear to a layman sufficiently plain. It is carefully observed at every duck shoot in India, where the Muhammadan beater will mutter his *Bismillah* even over a bird already dead, and proceed to cut its throat. But legal acumen set itself to explain away the command of Allah. The argument ran as follows. Allah is always present in the thoughts of a Musalman, even if he does not express the fact in words. Therefore an animal slain by a Muslim is invariably lawful food, whether he has repeated the sacred Name over it or not. In consequence, that which the Qur'an distinctly states to be sin is discovered to be a matter of indifference. One thinks of Pascal's casuist, who was greeted with the words: 'Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi'.

By a similar device other orders and prohibitions contained in the Qur'an could be circumvented. Muhammad denounced intoxicating drink (*khamr*) as an abomination, and the work of the devil.<sup>7</sup> His motive may have been to prevent intercourse with Christians. Some lawyers argued that the verse did not forbid moderate drinking. According to others, only the juice of the grape was unlawful, not beverages like date wine, however strong. The prohibitionists countered such pleas by inventing a tradition of Muhammad in which he foretold that some day his people would drink wine, calling it by unsuitable names; that they would be encouraged in this vice by their leaders (a thrust at certain bibulous Khalifs); and that Allah would turn the drinkers into monkeys and swine.<sup>8</sup>

Sometimes legal ingenuity employed itself in a more worthy way. A very curious instance of a legal fiction, constructed in the interests of religious toleration, comes from medieval Turkey. After the capture of Constantinople, in 1453, a considerable degree of toleration was extended to the Christian community of the city, and they were allowed to retain a number of their churches. In strict law these privileges could be granted only to those non-Muslims who had willingly surrendered; whereas all the world was aware that Constantinople, after a long siege, had been taken by assault. However, the Christians con-

tinued in their favoured position until, in the year 1538, some zealots drew attention to the illegality involved, and demanded that the surviving churches should be pulled down. When the affair came up for discussion in the Ottoman court, two centenarians who had taken part in the siege came forward as witnesses, and as a result of their evidence it was ruled that Constantinople had capitulated. Before the debate, it appears, the Patriarch received confidential instructions from high Turkish officials as to the manner in which he should present his case and tutor the witnesses. By means of this remarkable decision, which flew in the face of fact, the actual state of things was made to harmonize with religious law.<sup>9</sup>

The Muhammadans might have profited from a closer study of the legal system under which the Byzantines had lived. But the pride of Islam revolted at the idea of borrowing law from the Kafir, because it seemed tantamount to borrowing something of his religion. Hence the contributions of Roman Law to Islamic jurisprudence are meagre. It has been suggested that the rules relating to the burden of proof were derived from this source. But these are part of the common heritage of legal systems. So also in the matter of treating invariable custom as law. If Roman influence is to be traced here, it has to be admitted that Islam surpassed her instructors. The custom of an Arab tribe overshadows her whole conception of justice. Certainly the 'patria potestas' was her own from the beginning.<sup>10</sup>

In regard to Equity, the 'responsa prudentium' influenced the method, rather than the spirit, of Muhammadan law. Equity was called by the Muslim lawyers *istislah*, which denotes improvement. The term sounds like a reminiscence of Aristotle, who defines Equity as a correction of the law where it falls short by reason of its catholicity. But in Islam the equitable principle depended for its application on the judges rather than on the lawyers, so that it tended to become a 'wilderness of single instances'. Often the Mufti, in giving a decision (*fatwa*) would venture to travel beyond the letter of the law 'propter utilitatem

publicam'. An Ottoman or an Egyptian judge might rule that the acceptance of dividends, or investments in a State Loan, could be reconciled with the standing prohibition of usury.<sup>11</sup> But that did not abrogate or alter the sacred law of Islam. A large part of the legal fraternity in Muhammadan countries has consistently frowned upon Equity, as being in the nature of heresy. Every attempt to supplement or to humanize the Sunna was heavily handicapped. In unreformed Turkey the Sultan would from time to time issue a decree (*qanun*)—the despotic counterpart of an English statute—which the courts were required to administer.<sup>12</sup> Again, the lawyers disapproved. Indeed, the best and final comment on all efforts to better the Sunna may be found in the conclusion to which Turkey was at length driven, namely, that the Sunna could not be mended, and therefore must be ended. A fossil cannot be turned into an organism.

The case of the Shi'ah seemed at first sight more hopeful. There was still the *mujtahid*, who could claim to speak with authority on points of jurisprudence, on the ground that he received unearthly wisdom from the Hidden Imam. But the accession of celestial light does not seem to have illuminated the dark tracts of the Sunna. On the contrary, the *mujtahid* zealously guarded the staid conservatism of that code. It was for him to decide whether, in a particular instance, the customary law (*'urf*), which the Persian courts administered on behalf of the Shah's government, clashed with the Sunna. If a discrepancy was detected, the Shah's edict had to give way.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, so far as the development of law was concerned, Persia remained as stagnant as any other Muhammadan kingdom. The old maxim of Chancery, which says that Equity follows the law, has in Islam been only too well observed. And the process of evolution which has resulted in the English courts granting both legal and equitable remedies '*pari passu*', would have been regarded by Muslims as a downright chaotic form of procedure.

The European might answer that there is no lack of chaos in Islamic law—no distinction between civil and



criminal law, or between the law which governs a Muslim's contracts and the precept that tells him exactly how he must bathe. Law touches the Muslim at every turn. He views his religious code not merely as a list of obligations, but as a grand ideal, which human nature is all too weak to fulfil.<sup>14</sup> To be subject to that code counts in his view as itself a great privilege. This perhaps explains the reluctance which has sometimes been shown in admitting converts to the full legal status of Musalmans. The Khojas of Bombay, who did not embrace Islam till the sixteenth century of our era, are still governed by the Hindu law of intestate succession.<sup>15</sup> In modern times, too, Parsees who turned Muhammadan have often been excluded from full participation in the personal law of Islam.

Among the legal institutions which illustrate both the good and the evil of Islam's influence, one of the most important is slavery. In truth, any religion can be tested by its attitude on this point. Christianity originally acquiesced in slavery, but laid down principles which in the end would destroy it. St. Paul does not suggest to Philemon that the legal condition of Onesiphorus should be changed. None the less he envisages a spiritual kingdom in which there is neither bond nor free. Muhammad likewise accepted the fact of slavery as a matter of course. But he forgot to add the dynamite to his doctrine. The slave laws which he enunciated or inspired were neither better nor worse than those of Leviticus, and it is quite possible that he deliberately copied from that book. Just as Greece and Rome deemed slavery sufficiently sanctioned by Law of Nature, so the Musalmans, taking their cue from the Prophet, have rarely discerned in it an immoral or irreligious element. One early philosopher, indeed, ventured to protest against the enslaving of prisoners of war, but apparently only on the ground that the captives might be presumed to be non-Muslims, and therefore ignorant, and innocent of the offence which would justify their reduction to slavery.<sup>16</sup> History tells of no general movement against this institution in any Muhammadan country.

Certainly Islam did effect some improvement in the status of the Arabian slave. The Qur'an (4.36) enjoins kindness to 'those whom your right hands possess'.

Various traditions teach the same lesson.<sup>17</sup> The slaves are to receive food and clothing. Their strength is not to be strained by excessive tasks. They must not be killed or mutilated. A master who separates mother from child is threatened with separation from his own kindred in the Day of Uprising. With the consent of his owner, the slave was permitted to marry, and had to provide dower out of the proceeds of his labour.<sup>18</sup> Thus Muhammad to some extent put slaves in a better position. His influence may be compared with that exercised by the Stoics on Roman slavery. When Seneca occasionally dined with his slaves, it was considered remarkable condescension. But the Muslim masters usually treated their slaves almost as members of the family. Manumission, encouraged by the Qur'an (24.33), was always regarded as a pious act. And among the Shi'ahs a slave, if he were the sole surviving relative of the deceased, succeeded to the inheritance, the price of which was then applied to purchasing his liberty.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, while in theory the slave in Islam ranked as a chattel, and (with certain exceptions) could be sold or transferred at any time, he was better off than the Spartan Helot, and actually enviable in contrast with the Roman slave, or the workers on a Virginian plantation. None the less, the awful barbarities which throughout the centuries have accompanied the organized traffic in slaves are a lasting stain on Islam's record. They argue a fundamental defect in the religion—the inability to appreciate and reverence the dignity of human beings as such, or to realize the supreme value of human souls in the sight of God. At times the slaves revolted. The account of the Zanj rebellion which occurred in Mesopotamia in the ninth century, shows how the East African negroes could rival the exploits of Spartacus. An extraordinary feature of that mutiny was the fact that a number of Bedouins, eager as always for loot, threw in their lot with the rebels.<sup>20</sup>

Disturbances so serious were few. Slavery under the

Muslims continued generally on a peaceful course. Noiseless and obsequious, the black eunuch glided across the soft carpets of the Ottoman harem. Calm and uncomplaining, with something of the same spirit of resignation which marked his Muslim lord, the African performed his menial task. In Spain, at least, the slaves were not sorry to exchange Christian masters for Moors, who raised them to the position of practically independent cultivators; the tilling of soil being regarded as beneath the dignity which befits a conqueror.<sup>21</sup> Very different was the treatment accorded to Spanish and other Christian slaves in Northern Africa. In Algeria they were shockingly ill-used, and barely kept alive. They worked in chains, and often were set to drag the plough. By night they were pent in roofless public prisons, somewhat resembling the Roman 'ergastula'.<sup>22</sup>

In more modern days the treatment of slaves in Islam has been uniformly mild and considerate. Palgrave describes the negro slaves of Arabia as 'happy, fat, and shining'.<sup>23</sup> Doughty likewise found them thriving. The householders looked upon the slaves as Allah's wards, and frequently emancipated them, making suitable arrangements for their marriages.<sup>24</sup> In the French protectorate of Morocco, which yet retains its Muslim ruler, the European example is gradually making its force felt. There the slave markets have vanished, although the legal status continues. A slave may, if he chooses, claim to be transferred to a fresh master by order of the Qadi, or he may gain his freedom at the hands of the French tribunal.<sup>25</sup> But usually the domestic slaves of Morocco are too well satisfied with their condition to wish for the dubious privilege of liberty; nor have they hitherto learnt from the psychologists the distressing consequences which are supposed to flow from an inferiority complex. The fact remains that the founder of Islam failed to look forward, and that his religion by itself could not induce men to give up the system of slavery, which ultimately is based upon contempt for the non-Muslim.

The marriage laws of Islam furnish an additional illus-

tration of the manner in which heathen custom was improved up to a certain point, but no farther. If literature is a criterion, the condition of women in pre-Islamic Arabia—in the age, that is, which the Muslims style ‘the Ignorance’—appears to have been by no means unfavourable. They enjoyed a considerable measure of independence, and were the objects of chivalrous homage. No story of the North Arabian Saga attained more popularity than the one which told of the knight risking his life ‘to save from shame and thrall’ the maid in peril. A poet, commenting angrily upon the execution of a woman, wrote: ‘For us men it is appointed to slay and be slain, but for women to trail the robe’.<sup>26</sup> However, the ideal of marriage in those times was low. Temporary marriage commonly prevailed. This system the Prophet suppressed with difficulty, and it continued legal among the Shi’ahs. In place of marriage by capture, the general custom in Arabia, Muhammad introduced marriage by purchase. The husband buys his wife from her father, but the price paid becomes the woman’s property. That, perhaps, was an improvement on the method of the Sabine Rape. But in so far as Islam weakened the tribal system, the position of the wife became more precarious. Previously she had been able to appeal, in case of necessity, to her own people. Islam, in loosening the bond between the wife and her kinsmen, deprived her of a sure means of protection.<sup>27</sup>

Islam regards marriage, not as a sacrament, but as a bargain, and throughout the regulations which govern it may be traced ‘the cold prudence of the Semitic mind’. The contract is arranged by an agent (*wali*), who usually is the nearest blood-relation of the bride. Failing him, the Qadi should act. It is here that the Sunnis are handicapped by the absence of a priesthood. Muhammadan weddings in India tend to fall into two classes. Either the ceremony is performed with the utmost publicity and an often ruinous expenditure, or else it is a hole-and-corner affair, invested with all the obscurity, though not the authority, of an English registry office. In Sind, some sort of Mullah is supposed to preside, but often the rite is hurried through

in a casual, irregular way ; the result being that in a court of law there is frequently the greatest difficulty in deciding whether the marriage actually took place. The presence of a man of religion at the ceremony is not the essential thing. Validity depends on the due recitation of the formula by the parties.<sup>28</sup> The Mullah is there to superintend rather than to bless. Significance too may be found in the fact that *nikah*, the universal term for marriage, denotes its physical aspect. If it be true that the beginning of culture implies the repression of instinct, Islam fails again. The fanciful and indelicate details with which the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, and that of the Queen of Sheba, are embroidered in the Qur'an appear designed for a sensual understanding.<sup>29</sup> Nor does the book, on the whole, exhibit a lofty ideal of womanhood. In Persia, within a century of the Flight, the system of free love was preached, not without effect, by a heretic named Khadasha (*khadash*, he scratched, i.e. the scratcher of the faith). He met with sufficient success to provoke a quarrel between the Imam and the Shi'ahs of Eastern Persia.<sup>30</sup>

In the Muhammadan law of marriage the main evil centres around divorce rather than polygamy. The luxury of a plurality of wives could be afforded only by the comparatively rich. Even apart from the question of expense, Muslims are keenly alive to the drawbacks of the harem. According to a Turkish proverb, two asses give as much trouble as a whole caravan, and two wives as much as one law-court. And a sententious Arab has remarked : 'I know not which is the more pitiable : he who struggles with the waves (*amwaj*), or he who rises against his wives (*azwaj*).' The Qur'an itself (4.129) expects trouble, and naively informs Muslims that they will not be able to treat all wives impartially, but expresses a hope that none will be entirely excluded from favour.

Muslim modernists, conscious of the reproach of polygamy, have often attempted to defend this institution. But they are not quite consistent. Sometimes it is urged that Nature clearly intends polygamy. More often the argument is that Muhammad neither adopted nor legal-

ized it. The Ahmadiya editor, commenting on Qur'an 4.3, says : 'This passage permits polygamy under certain circumstances ; it does not enjoin it, nor even permit it unconditionally.' The Egyptian modernist journal, *Al Manar*, goes so far as to assert that polygamy is unlawful, because religion pursues the good of Society, and 'if an institution produces harmful effects, it must be modified and adapted to the needs of the time'.<sup>31</sup> On the hypothesis that this view is correct, the verse of the Qur'an has been wrongly interpreted by the Muslim world throughout the centuries. It is true that the permission to marry four wives is made by the Qur'an conditional. But the mass of Muhammadans have forgotten the protasis, and remembered only the apodosis. They can still point to verse 129 of the same Sura, which obviously assumes a polygamous system as the general rule. This verse the Ahmadiya edition passes over in silence.

In legislation one false step inevitably leads to another. By perpetuating the veil, Muhammad had rendered marriage a more risky lottery than it is bound to be. Healthy intercourse between the sexes before marriage was jealously restricted.<sup>32</sup> A Muslim, marrying a woman whose face he had never seen, was liable to grievous disappointment. Logic suggested that he should be given an easy way of extricating himself from the bad speculation which was practically forced upon him. But the Qur'an, oblivious of the mutual self-sacrifice and compromise which married life demands, made the path of exit unduly simple and inviting. Muhammadan law gives the right of divorce to the husband, and does not require him to assign reasons for his action. Except as regards the right to a portion of the dower, the claims of the woman are scarcely regarded. The husband who has blurted out the word of dismissal—the only formality required—may twice repent. After he has divorced her a third time, he cannot take her again until she has been married to a second husband and been by him also divorced.<sup>33</sup> This regulation, which stamps the divorce law of Islam as inferior to that of Deuteronomy, has very definitely con-

tributed to the degradation of Muslim women. Moreover, in spite of any deterrent influence exercised by the prospect of some monetary loss, the husband has ever the 'bill of divorcement' near the tip of his tongue ; and the wife is constantly haunted by the fear that the dread sentence may be pronounced. Among the Muslims of Arabia, Syria, and Palestine, divorce is at the present time extremely common.<sup>34</sup> In Egypt the great majority of marriages are said to be followed by divorce.<sup>35</sup> India too presents the same dismal picture. Divorced women, especially those of the poorer classes, are often unable to recover their dowers, and it is seldom worth their while to sue for a remedy in the civil court. Vainly does tradition credit Muhammad with the words : 'Of lawful things the most hateful to God is divorce.'<sup>36</sup>

In one notable respect the marriage law of the Qur'an must be regarded as retrograde in comparison with the pre-Islamic code which it superseded. Muhammad himself had doubts as to whether he could rightly marry the divorced wife of his own adopted son Zaid. But Gabriel brought from heaven the requisite indulgence, which has ever since constituted the law of Islam on this point.<sup>37</sup> The custom in Arabia up to the time of the Prophet had been to consider an adopted son as equivalent in all respects to a natural son—the same theory as that of Roman Law.

On the other hand, the precepts of the Qur'an and the teaching of the traditions on the subject of caring for orphans have not failed to bear fruit. 'He who caresses an orphan's head shall receive for every hair that his hand touches a light on the Day of Resurrection.' 'He who takes care of the widow and the orphan is equal in merit to him who spends his life in the holy war.'<sup>38</sup> Muhammadans in general are distinguished by their kind treatment of the fatherless. Children, as such, are not very well protected against bad treatment, and, except in countries where Christianity has prompted industrial legislation, child labour is frequently abused. Thus in Persia children are kept working long hours at the carpet-looms, and boys no

more than five years old must toil incessantly at the underground water-channels.<sup>39</sup>

The law of intestate succession, as laid down in the Qur'an, assigned shares to females and children, and thus improved on the custom of pagan Arabia. But usually the woman's share is only half that of the male. When the deceased has left children, the widow is to receive only one-eighth of the property, after payment of bequests and debts.<sup>40</sup> Further, the Muslim is fortified in his spiritual pride by the enactment which precludes Christians, murderers, Jews, and slaves from the succession.<sup>41</sup>

In commercial matters the Qur'an enjoins that contracts should be carefully drawn up, and scrupulously kept. The *hadith* on this subject are an index of popular morality, and on the whole they reveal a high standard of commercial dealing. Muhammad is reported as saying: 'The place of the faithful merchant who speaks the truth is with the prophets, the veracious, and the martyrs.' On the same lips is placed a more cynical remark: 'When he is ruined, a merchant speaks the truth.' Misrepresentations on the part of a vendor are sternly denounced, and all defects in the article offered for sale must be disclosed. Monopoly is ranked as a crime.<sup>42</sup> The Qur'an (2.275) declares that Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury. But Muslim lawyers were not slow to invent contrivances for evading the prohibition. It is also noteworthy that the Qur'an does not actually forbid the taking of interest from a non-Muslim. If Muhammad intended his followers to do so, the fact illustrates either his narrowness of outlook or his moral inconsistency. For if usury is wrong 'per se', there is no difference whether it be accepted from a Muslim or a Kafir. Yet the Prophet would only have been following the exception allowed in Deuteronomy (23.20): 'Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury.'

In the matter of criminal law Islam did not accomplish very much in the way of humanizing the wild justice of the Arabs. The basic principle is retaliation. But all crimes against the person, including murder, manslaughter, and wounding, can be punished by fines.<sup>43</sup> The



blood-money payable (according to the Sunna) for slaying a woman is only half of that for slaying a free man ; and the price of a slave's blood is his market value. The acceptance of money in lieu of retaliation in kind depends upon the wish of the injured party, or his representatives in interest. But no Muslim under Hanafi law may be punished with death for killing his own child, or his slave. Muhammad must be given credit for having set his face against the prevalent practice of infanticide, although he does not prescribe a punishment for this offence.<sup>44</sup>

He appears to have regarded property as more sacred than life. The Sura (5.58) which commands that the hands of a thief, male or female, shall be cut off, contains no alternative provision for a fine or restitution. In Persia this awful punishment has continued, down to the present century, to be inflicted on robbers. At Isfahan the unfortunate criminals who suffered this penalty used to proceed to the Christian Mission for treatment of their wounds. In 1903, at Shiraz, three robbers had their tongues cut out for selling bread at too high a price.<sup>45</sup> It is plain that Islam takes the retributive view of punishment, and altogether ignores the reformative element.

Modern Arabia provides an interesting example of Muhammadan law at work in all its pristine crudeness, unadorned by the glosses of the jurists. There the tribe is everything, and it is solely as a member of the tribe, and a contribution to its strength, that the individual possesses any importance. The blood-money for murder is estimated in Sinai at forty-one superior camels. The strict application of the principle that every life lost must be paid for results often in a strange fixing of responsibility. If an accused person dies in prison, blood-money must be paid by the informer who gave the information leading to the man's detention ; the question of the truth or falsehood of the facts stated being quite immaterial.<sup>46</sup> The risks run by women in the lonely life of the desert have prompted the Western Arabians to adopt strong means for their protection. Here the law of Muhammad is overridden by custom. A woman who kills another woman is

liable only to the extent of giving the usual forty-one camels. But a man who kills a woman is compelled to pay four times the ordinary blood-money.<sup>47</sup> Among the Baluchis legal custom permits compensation for murder of a woman to take the form of giving in marriage a girl of the offender's tribe or family.

The law of evidence in Islam is both fragmentary and fantastic. The Qur'an (4.15) requires that adultery shall be proved by four witnesses—a provision that makes a conviction well-nigh impossible. A non-Muslim is not competent to give evidence.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, circumstantial evidence is not admitted.<sup>49</sup> The testimony of a woman, also, is inadmissible except in suits relating to property or to her own safety. Other curious rules of evidence abound in Muhammadan law. For example, killing by poison is not murder unless it is proved that the deceased was actually forced to drink the poison.<sup>50</sup>

On the whole, it cannot be affirmed that legal procedure under Islam evinces a consuming desire to arrive at the actual facts. An air of fatalism seems to hang over the Muslim law-courts—and indeed over every court in the eyes of a Muhammadan. He is inclined to view the taking of evidence in the light of a solemn farce, which custom idly prescribes. Before the judge was born, it was settled how he was to give judgment. He may count the number of flies on the window of the court-house, to see whether it be odd or even, and may think he decides the case accordingly. But Fate has already fixed the number. Fate and the judge both derive their names from the same Arabic root (*qada*, he decided).

Nevertheless, certain legal oaths have exercised a very powerful influence, albeit in early Arabia it was deemed possible by means of a sin-offering (*kaffara*, a covering) to escape the consequences of false swearing.<sup>51</sup> The use of oaths in ordinary conversation—such as 'by the beard of the Prophet'—is sufficiently common among the Arabs. Gradually the form of oath required for purposes of evidence was rendered more and more impressive. At first a witness had to repeat his statement fifteen times, and to

declare that if he spoke falsely his wives should be legally divorced from him. Later came the oath on the Qur'an, with or without the sword.<sup>52</sup> To a Muhammadan the colourless and secular promise to speak the truth, which is the timid substitute for an oath in the courts of British India, has not nearly the same binding force as an oath upon the Qur'an.

Among certain Bedouin tribes the plaintiff can demand that the defendant and his backers shall take an oath upon the tomb of a local saint. Nobody would dream of swearing falsely on the grave of his own Sheikh, lest the ghost of the saint should bring misfortune. By this device, it is said, the facts of the case are inevitably brought to light. Where cross-swearing occurs in serious cases, the matter is decided by ordeal. The accused is obliged to lick a red-hot ladle, and his guilt or his innocence is indicated by the consequent condition of his tongue.<sup>53</sup> This and other methods of ordeal employed in Arabia appear to work satisfactorily, and are obviously based on some acquaintance with psychology.

Dignity is not a distinguishing feature of Muslim judicial administration. When the Ottoman dispensed justice in Yemen, the parties to a civil suit would wrangle and fight in open court, and during the proceedings market-women used to come in and offer their wares for sale. 'How can I go to prison when I am in the middle of a week's ploughing?' Such was the indignant retort of a debtor on hearing his sentence. So the case was settled by agreement. For Allah is merciful.<sup>54</sup>

## CHAPTER IX

### ISLAM AND REALITY

MUSLIM philosophy, no less than Muslim law, is continually obsessed and overshadowed by the Qur'an. The line which separates philosophy from theology was seldom clearly seen. And even in the case of those thinkers who essayed to set out on a purely intellectual quest after truth, it is not difficult to observe how at the back of their minds there lurks the feeling that the Prophet and his book had said the last word. The Qur'an is uniformly regarded as a compendium of heavenly information 'de omni re scibili'. Whatever conclusion clashes with the Qur'an must be wrong. Hence nearly all Muhammadan philosophy exhibits a strong scholastic colouring. Islam cannot be imagined the producer of a Hume or a Kant. Types like Anselm or Aquinas were more within the scope of her talents. The consciousness that metaphysics must be made to square with a written revelation was certain to cramp the style of the philosopher. But at all events he could read into the Qur'an all sorts of things which the uninitiated would never find there. Averroes asserts that religion is valuable to the State because of its moral purpose. It is truth in a form suitable for big children. Only the philosopher, he says, can interpret the Qur'an, and the people must not be told more than they are capable of receiving. For the aim of the Qur'an is not to make men more learned, but to make them better. Ibn Tufail likewise observes that philosophy is but the higher form of the same truth whereof religious dogmas give an imperfect representation, suitable to the raw intelligence of the crowd.<sup>1</sup> The philosophers, it seems, could not escape vanity in magnifying their office. Nor indeed is the fact devoid of significance, that the study of logic and meta-

physics—the branches of philosophy most remote from common life—has always in Islam proved more popular than moral and political philosophy.

Nöldeke has remarked that the Semite is deficient in the power of taking a general view, and in the gift of large and logical thought.<sup>2</sup> His criticism applies not only to the Arabs, but also, in great measure, to Muslims in general. The working of the Muhammadan mind is disjunctive. It sees not the wood for the trees. This characteristic may be traced back to the Qur'an itself. Whether viewed as a product of art or as a piece of theology, the book shows a remarkable lack of unity and continuity. One result of tearing Old Testament stories from their setting is to render the Qur'an a series of disconnected narratives—a book without a climax, a picture without a controlling design. Such unity as is induced by the repetition of stereotyped warnings against infidelity, or of exhortations to obedience, fails to effect a genuine harmony. The universal is ousted by the particular. The Qur'an encourages the habit of piecemeal thinking. Hence we notice among even the greatest minds of Islam an absence of that power of sustained flight, which, whether in poetry or in philosophy, goes to the making of an original and independent first-class work. Muslim philosophers could study, criticize, imitate, and expound. But they needed ample straw for the making of their bricks. And the straw was wafted to them on a western wind, straight from Stageira.

During the two centuries immediately preceding the rise of Islam, the schools of Alexandria and of Syria had been busily occupied in the study of Greek science and philosophy. Nestorians and Monophysites might be heretics of the deepest dye. But at least they included industrious scholars, such as Sergius, Probus, and James of Edessa. They commented on certain of Aristotle's writings, especially the *Organon*. Through their labours Muhammadan students gained their earliest introduction to the Aristotelian philosophy. Love of learning provided a common ground on which Muslims and Christians might meet. In fact, this literary co-operation between followers

of the two creeds was far more in evidence in the Middle Ages than in modern times. And as we look back on the course of history, we think, a little wistfully perhaps, of that college of translators which the Khalif Ma'mun founded at Baghdad, with a Christian at its head.<sup>3</sup>

At the outset Aristotle's writings made a very deep impression on Islamic thought. It was eminently characteristic that the Muslim philosophers preferred Aristotle to Plato. The form in which the Aristotelian writings were cast—some of them were perchance only notes for lectures—made them the easier to be apprehended. Besides, Aristotle seemed to set himself the very questions which the Qur'an had answered. Not that Aristotle could improve on that book. But it would be interesting to see how his theories confirmed or supplemented the messages of Gabriel.

The long process of reconciling the two was begun by the Mu'tazilites. Lightly they embarked on the impossible task. For a time the congenital blindness of Muslims to the law of contradiction made the work comparatively easy. If Aristotle affirmed that the universe had existed from eternity, and the Qur'an purported to picture its creation at a given time, there was no real discrepancy. The universe existed potentially from the depths of eternity, and creation fitted it into the framework of time and space.<sup>4</sup> Evidently, the commentators had at least grasped the antithesis between *δύναμις* and *ἐνέργεια*.

When the debate turned, as it had to turn, towards speculation on the nature and attributes of Allah, the stark contrast between the Greek philosopher and the Arabian volume became more noticeable and more serious. Aristotle's conception of God as *νόησις νοήσεως* seems far indeed from the Allah of the Qur'an. That idea of the Godhead would not stagger the mind familiar with the Fourth Gospel or with the Epistle to the Romans.

Christianity was sufficiently large and profound to absorb whatever was true in the philosophy of Hellas. With the Mu'tazilite enquirer the position was different. The Qur'an contains no coherent metaphysical doctrine of

the Divine Nature. And when the Muslim philosopher, interpreting Aristotle with the aid of Neo-Platonism (instead of going back to the real Plato), proceeded to define Allah by negatives, he arrived, like the false Areopagite, at a Supra-Essential and Supra-Personal Being. The Mu'tazilite, suddenly discovering what was meant by anthropomorphism, determined to eschew it at all costs. His religion had failed to exhibit Allah as corresponding, in an infinite degree, to whatever is best in human nature. Nor did it prompt him to suspect that anthropomorphism, in the higher sense, might be both necessary and true. Islam gave him no sustaining consciousness of a personal, loving God—no anchor to steady the ship of his soul amid the many currents of intellectual conjecture.

Revelling in the new possession of the dialectic art, which Plato terms the coping-stone of the sciences, the Muslim thinkers attacked all kinds of problems. What was a 'thing'? How was knowledge possible? Was the Qur'an a miracle? Could men see Allah? Was there a category of causality? The favourite reply to this last question stated that Allah creates without ceasing. Zaid may believe himself to be walking along a street. The matter is not so simple. In each fraction of a second God has altered His creation, and set the body of Zaid in a fresh position.<sup>5</sup> This view would naturally appeal to the Muslim, with his disjunctive outlook on life.

In those days the Muslim philosopher was a Jack of all trades. If Aristotle could be an authority on every branch of philosophy and science, it behoved his followers to be similarly comprehensive. Al Kindi, the one outstanding philosopher of purely Arab blood (the rest being Persians, Turks, or Berbers) rivalled Juvenal's 'hungry Greekling' in the number and variety of his accomplishments. History, geography, astronomy, mathematics, medicine—he was acquainted with them all. His insistence on the study of geometry in connexion with philosophy recalls the warning which Plato set over the gateway of the Academy. Al Kindi, like Pythagoras, believed in mystical numbers.<sup>6</sup> He believed, too, in a world-soul, of which

human souls are emanations. Islam can hardly claim to have produced in Al Kindi an original genius. But at least he introduced to the Saracen world the study of psychology, based on Aristotle's treatise 'De Anima'. He was supposed to be more deeply enamoured of Greek wisdom than of Islam's creed.

Philosophy had started to run riot. A reaction set in. When, in the year 912, Al Ash'ari, a leader of free thought, publicly recanted, and fled back to the extreme of orthodoxy, the pious could once more breathe freely. The next great philosopher to appear on the Muhammadan scene was Al Farabi, of Turkish extraction, an interesting and typical figure. It is worthy of note that at Baghdad Al Farabi studied under Christian teachers. Legend credited him with a knowledge of all the seventy languages of the world.<sup>7</sup> He began by an attempt to reconcile Plato and Aristotle, alleging that the difference between them was mainly a difference of method. Actually, Aristotle was Al Farabi's never-failing oracle. He writes as a convinced Muslim. If such he was, he must have possessed a very curious type of mind, moulded on similar lines, perhaps, to that of Cardinal Newman. Wafted along on the breeze of Aristotelian argument, whithersoever it might lead him, Al Farabi can hardly have perceived how far he was drifting from Islam.

Yet he grasped some deep truths. He understands, for instance, how in God thought is identical with action. Aristotle had said that the occupation of God is to contemplate Himself. Al Farabi sees that the world comes into existence in the very course of such contemplation; so that the universe is due, not so much to a single act of creative Will, as to God's own Thought. But then our philosopher wanders off into the mazes of Neo-Platonic fancy. He speaks of angels and spirits who make the heavenly bodies, and seems to think that the stars have souls. His threefold hierarchy—God, the spirits of the spheres, and active Reason—may betray the influence of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, a mystery which Muslims have seldom endeavoured to explore.



Within the human soul also Al Farabi discovers an ordered hierarchy ; not a mere set of co-ordinated parts or functions, but a gradually ascending and progressive series. Starting from passive intelligence, we proceed to the intelligence that comprehends abstract ideas. But this latter power is made possible only by God. From Him comes the *Intellectus Agens*, an emanation which rouses to activity the dormant faculties of the human mind. All thoughts, therefore, are God's thoughts. All intellect is one. The only element of man which can be deemed capable of immortality is the rational soul—an attenuated being, void of warm desires, and incapable of consorting with the animal soul or with anything in the nature of a body. Union between the rational soul and the heavenly spirit is the goal for mankind.<sup>8</sup> But on the question whether the soul survives without sacrificing its individuality Al Farabi is vague and undecided. Like the author of 'Religio Medici', he loves to lose himself in a mystery. At all events, his idea of the after world is utterly at variance with the Paradise of the Qur'an. And yet it might well be argued that Al Farabi stands for the natural reaction of inquisitive piety against the grossness of that celestial garden. Recoiling from an ideal so sensuous and sensual, the philosopher makes heaven as shadowy as Sheol, unsatisfying as Nirvana.

Al Farabi, who could touch no topic without illuminating it, is especially striking in his treatment of political philosophy. In his book entitled 'The Excellent City' he sketches the Utopian State, governed, in Platonic style, by wise men. He seizes the opportunity, as did St. Augustine, to show the falseness of many popular theories, so that his essay becomes half satire and half sermon. Some of the fallacies which Al Farabi exposes wear a strangely modern garb. In discussing the principle upon which society and the State are based, he notes the opinion (worthy of Machiavelli) that people associate with each other only so long as it chances to suit their interests, and that the proper attitude of every town towards its neighbour is one of rivalry and war. Again, Al Farabi touches on the

theory that men deliberately and consciously started the State, because they were impressed with the inability of the isolated individual to supply his own needs. Evidently Rousseau had Muhammadan precursors. Certain other philosophers, it seems, held that 'similia similibus' was a sufficient explanation of society's origin. Al Farabi also condemns those who consider that all social organization is founded on fear.<sup>9</sup>

It has been hinted that these theories were no more than the outcome of Al Farabi's own imagination, and that he set up men of straw for the mere pleasure of knocking them down. If speculations of the kind which he describes were actually in the air, the fact indicates an amazing freshness and independence of outlook in that early age. For Al Farabi died in the year 950, about the time when Saxon and Dane were testing with their swords certain of the arguments which he described. That the study of philosophy was popular is proved by the existence and activity of the learned society which called itself the Brethren of Purity (*ikhwan-as-safa*). The main significance of this community, whose industry found vent in massive encyclopaedias, lies in the indication of a widening breach between the Qur'an and philosophy. To the alert mind it was growing more and more apparent that Muhammad's message constituted a very poor guide to reality. The Brethren of Purity were the real inspirers of the Sufi movement.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna), no less than Al Farabi, contrived to combine philosophic speculation with belief in Islam. It is said that whenever an intellectual problem puzzled him, he would go to the mosque and pray to be enlightened.<sup>10</sup> 'Inquisitio veritatis pia et humilis' might have stood for his motto. He lived the practical as well as the contemplative life. He saw many cities, and knew the minds of many princes. As Wazir to the Sultan of Hamadan, Avicenna gained acquaintance with the art of government. His experiences must have had a humanizing effect on him, and he has been rightly called 'the great philosopher of accommodation in the East'. Still, he could

not shake off the Muslim philosopher's contempt for the multitude—a particular phase, no doubt, of the spiritual pride which the Qur'an is so apt to engender. Although he insists on individual immortality, improving thus on Al Farabi's vague conception, Avicenna opines that the teaching of the Qur'an about the resurrection of the body was intended only for the vulgar herd. He has a secret doctrine (suitable to the select few) regarding the freedom of spirit attained by those who worship God without hope and without fear.<sup>11</sup>

In exploring the nature of the Godhead, Avicenna repeats much of Al Farabi's doctrine. But he boldly states that the power of God is limited. It is only the first World Spirit that proceeds directly from Him. God knows only the universal, not the particular. The existence of evil, according to Avicenna, is required in order to bring about the highest good, so that the absence of evil would itself be a worse evil. 'Ergo si omitteretur illud genus boni, tunc eius omissio esset malum supra hoc malum, quod provenit ex ipsius productione.'<sup>12</sup> Good and evil are not the same to God as to us, because we cannot view them 'sub specie aeternitatis'. Evil is relative. It remains a mystery to men. But sometimes the mystic can pierce the veil.<sup>13</sup>

The Qur'anic idea of Allah as mere Unity may be observed as influencing Avicenna's account of the divine attributes. According to him, we cannot describe God. We can only speak of Him through negatives, and indicate the gulf which separates Him from human qualities. At most it can be affirmed that God is *Necesse-esse* (*Zaruri al wajud*).<sup>14</sup>

Avicenna distinguishes speculative philosophy, which aims at truth, from practical philosophy, which seeks goodness. Here comes in the function of prophets. He declares that a prophet should be one who is gifted with qualifications in which all other men are lacking. Hence a prophet's business is to work miracles, and also to instruct mankind about their affairs and their laws, following the command of God, who inspires him. More-

over a prophet will prescribe not only religious ritual, but will ensure worldly advantages to his followers by making them fight against the infidel. He has a kind of divinity in him, which distinguishes him from the remainder of mankind.<sup>15</sup> The description does not altogether fit the Meccan seer, and perhaps was designed to show what he ought to have been.

More deeply religious in tone, and in some respects more modern, than the writings of Avicenna are those of Al Ghazali (1058-1111). Born a Persian, Al Ghazali had something of the Persian bent towards mysticism. After a sojourn in the ranks of the rationalists, he returned to the fold of orthodoxy, and became a professor of law at Baghdad. And although his books were burnt at Cordova by order of the Spanish Khalif, his theology, at least for Eastern eyes, was sufficiently correct to win for him the title, 'Proof of Islam'. The very names of his two chief works proclaim his general attitude. One is called 'The Revival of Religious Sciences'; the other, 'The Destruction of the Philosophers'. The burden of his message is that philosophy devoid of faith cannot find out God. He distrusts reason. How charmed he would have been to hear Pascal's aphorism, that the heart has its reasons, of which Reason knows nothing! Or we may fancy Al Ghazali reading with pleasure the antinomies of Kant, wherein Reason is made to look silly by conclusively proving pairs of contradictory statements. Tired of Aristotle, Al Ghazali bids men look into their own consciences, and base their religion on the inner light. He examines the causes which lead men to believe in various creeds, and arrives at the conclusion that the firmest faith is not that which is founded on examination and logical proof.

In Al Ghazali's view, the essence of God consists in thought. The completely real Spirit wills nothing, since to will implies need or deficiency. Hence God upholds His creation in contemplation undisturbed by any wish. Nevertheless—and now we arrive at the antinomy—will is an eternal attribute of God. He has cognisance of the world because He wills the world. Nay, it is His Will

which causes all individual things. Causes, in the ordinary sense of the term, there are none. God has willed that certain phenomena should always occur in a fixed order. What is vulgarly named change never happens. A thing either is, or is not. The Divine Will perpetually creates and annihilates.<sup>16</sup> Truly, a refinement on the famous theory of Hume !

Al Ghazali has small patience with those who catch hold of tiny fragments of truth, and imagine they possess the whole. Such folk he satirizes in an allegory which in the following century was to find a place in the great Sufi poem, the *Mathnavi*. An elephant visits the city of the blind. The inhabitants, after feeling various portions of him, are asked to define an elephant. One replies that the creature is like a ship. Others compare him with a pillar, or a tent. All their knowledge is piecemeal.<sup>17</sup>

To Al Ghazali religion is in essence the experience of the soul. He observes that belief has three stages. First, there is the creed of the crowd ; secondly, the knowledge of the learned ; thirdly, the immediate certainty of those who, in the highest sense, may be said to know. This recognition of intuitive perception marks an important advance toward the Sufi doctrine. Al Ghazali was not by any means a thorough-going Sufi. The historical revelation contained in the messages of prophets and saints was to him no whit less essential than the evidence furnished by the believer's own heart.<sup>18</sup> There seemed to Al Ghazali no contradiction or discrepancy between the two. If Tertullian could speak of the soul as being naturally Christian, Al Ghazali would have contended that it was naturally Muslim. He retained something of that spirit of humble wonder which characterizes many leaders of religion and philosophy in every age. Thus, in discussing the physical resurrection, he remarks that the uniting of the spirit to an earthly body is, after all, just as much a marvel as its subsequent union with the heavenly. The soul is the essential man, and it makes no difference from what materials the celestial body may be fashioned.<sup>19</sup>

Al Ghazali dealt a deadly blow to the scholastic philo-

sophy of the Orient. After his time philosophy became both dangerous and unpopular, and eventually strayed into the by-paths of Persian mysticism. Under Muslim rule, to a greater extent than almost any other, the whole cult of learning has depended on the measure of encouragement vouchsafed by reigning princes. No doubt there was, and is, among the masses of Muhammadans, a general reverence for the learned man, in strange contrast to the amused contempt with which he is regarded by most of the English. 'The ink of the wise is more precious than the blood of the martyrs.' So runs an Arabian proverb. And another says : 'The learned are the ornament of the earth, as the stars deck the sky.' Yet it may be doubted whether Islam of itself incites the mind to activity.

On the other hand, the output of Muslim philosophy and science is sometimes rather unfairly belittled. In the East the chief philosophers were Persian. Those of Spain were not Arabs, and much of the impulse to study came from the Spanish Jews. But it appears unreasonable to deny to Islam all credit for the achievements of non-Arab Muhammadans. Although Arabia was the cradle of Islam, it has to be remembered that that country had no traditions of culture, and hence could not be expected to vie with Persia in producing great thinkers. The Arabic language, with its subtle philosophical vocabulary, no less exact and expressive than the Greek, provided the vehicle through which abstract thought was conveyed. The Jews, who, in conjunction with Muhammadans and Christians, pursued their researches in the big library at Toledo, used Arabic as their vernacular, and must have entertained the utmost respect for a creed which had drawn so much from their own.

Again it is urged that 'precisely as individuals have shown themselves possessed of speculative genius, have they departed from the rigid orthodoxy of the Qur'an'.<sup>20</sup> But while it may be difficult to conceive how any person equipped with the slightest training in logic can accept the Qur'an at its face value, it has to be admitted that even in Christian countries philosophers are not usually

distinguished for their religious orthodoxy. If even the Christian scholar sees both less and more in the Bible than the untutored believer, yet both are Christians.

The essential loneliness of the philosopher, exploring uncharted tracts of speculative thought, appears in the title given to his chief work by Ibn Baja (Avempace, d. 1138). He called it 'Guidance for the Solitary'. A follower of Al Farabi, and something of a pessimist, he was inclined to despair of the masses, and to console himself with imagining an intellectual aristocracy—the wise men making for themselves a State within a State. Not that he offered much comfort either to the savant or the fool. Pure thought alone is privileged to behold God. Avempace believed that only the spirit of mankind as a whole is eternal, and that an individual survival cannot be presumed. He held too the curious opinion that form can exist by itself.<sup>21</sup>

The philosophical romance, *Hai ibn Yaqdan* (the Active, son of the Vigilant), of Ibn Tufail (Abubacer) exhibits a faint resemblance to the Platonic myth. Like Avempace, this philosopher has small hope of the multitude, albeit his despair is clothed in poetic guise. Hai represents humanity apart from revelation. Marooned from infancy on a desert isle, he is suckled by a gazelle. After long years of meditation, Hai arrives at the Sufi vision of God. Then a visitor reaches him from another island, inhabited by Musalmans. The two compare notes, and discover that the philosophy of Hai and the beliefs of the Muslims are substantially the same. Yet it is obvious to Hai that these folk require more light. In order to supply the omission, Hai crosses to the other island and begins to preach. But the people are deaf to his doctrines. All are busy amassing worldly wealth. 'Getting and spending we lay waste our powers.' So Hai perceives that Muhammad was right in giving to the ordinary man nothing more than a veiled form of the truth, and goes back to Sufi exercises, his substitute for the ritual of Islam.<sup>22</sup>

The more prosaic Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126-1198) disdained to dress truth in fairy fiction. Nobody surpassed

him in his reverence for Aristotle, whom he regarded as the perfect thinker. Displaying the customary versatility of the Muslim philosopher, Averroes served as Qadi of Seville, and later was physician to the Khalif. He considered, like Plato, that all should contribute to the well-being of the State, and he traced many of the evils of his times to the seclusion of women. Several of the theories which had become the commonplaces of Muslim philosophy reappear in the writings of Averroes. But he has generally something fresh to say. He looked on religion as the handmaid of philosophy, and his chief aim was to reveal the treasures of the Aristotelian storehouse. He so disliked Al Ghazali for rebelling against Aristotle that he published, by way of counterblast, a 'Destruction of the Destruction'.

A true Scholastic, Averroes is convinced that there can be no ultimate contradiction between philosophy (i.e. Aristotle) and the Qur'an. Common people must accept and obey that book as it stands, and take all its imagery literally.<sup>23</sup> The State can properly put heretics to death. Religion is not doctrine, but law. Yet philosophers may, when they please, treat the Qur'an as Origen treated the Scriptures, and read into it their own meaning.

Islam's undervaluation of personality has doubtless influenced Averroes' opinions regarding both the divine nature and the human. To him the world is an eternal process of becoming, a perpetual transition from the potential to the actual, and again from actual to potential. Such a process implies movement. Therefore there must be an Eternal Mover of the universe, who Himself is unmoved. God, for Averroes, is the original Form of all things. That is to say, Form is one and indivisible. But the human soul is a form, and therefore one. Hence we cannot speak of individual souls as attaining to immortality. Whatever is individual is perishable. God, 'careless of the single life', knows not the particular, since He cannot know anything lower than Himself.<sup>24</sup> Thus the gap which the Qur'an left between God and man remains unbridged. Averroes cares not. Aristotle had solved these problems long before.



In one respect, at least, Averroes improves on the teaching of the Qur'an. Throughout that book is to be found the assumption that good is good, and evil is evil, only because Allah wills that they should be such; as if these two terms were simply labels which He arbitrarily affixes to human actions. Averroes, on the contrary, argues that all things derive their moral character from nature and reason.<sup>25</sup> He puts ethics on a firmer basis by summoning reason to the aid of goodness. The private opinion of Averroes on the private life of Muhammad would have made instructive reading. Dante, measuring the difference between the two, sets the Prophet in the ninth chasm of *Inferno*, but admits Averroes, 'che il gran comento feo', with other noble heathen, to the First Circle.

Another philosopher who might have helped in the correction of the Qur'an, albeit from a different point of view, is Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (1332-1406). The Qur'an contains many anachronisms and historical mistakes, the influence of which has not tended to make Muhammadans more careful in the matter of ascertaining correct dates and distinguishing between fact and legend. In Muslim writings, for example, it is not uncommon to find Elijah or Alexander the Great transferred to epochs not their own, and compelled to jostle those whom they could not possibly have met. It is precisely this slipshod manner of treating truth which rouses the indignation of Ibn Khaldun. He has a better notion of the dignity of Clio. At the beginning of his *Prolegomena* he gives his idea of the historical method. His critical outlook is not unlike that of Thucydides. The historian who trusts to mere tradition and does not comprehend the principles which underlie custom, the rules of the art of administration, and the nature of civilization; who does not deduce the hidden from the manifest, and the present from the past—such a man will not be safe from stumbling, and will be in constant danger of straying from the main road of truth.<sup>26</sup> Ibn Khaldun, in fact, claims that history is a branch of philosophy. He thinks he has found out a royal and infallible method for the writing of history, and is somewhat inclined to

Naturally, therefore, the question has often been asked, whether the Sufis, the mystics of Islam, are entitled to rank as Muhammadans. This seems to involve a further question: when is a Muslim not a Muslim? Now it is perfectly true that the Sufis, for the most part, pay but small regard to the five pillars of Islam. The Haj they rather despise, since their pilgrimage is an affair of the heart. 'There is no need to turn to the Ka'aba when one is in it.'<sup>1</sup> Or if something more vivid is desired, it is sufficient to walk seven times round the tomb of a selected saint. So also the Sufi is inclined to neglect the prescribed prayers, believing, perhaps justly, that his own meditations are more valuable than the official devotions.<sup>2</sup> Yet the Sufi counts himself a Muslim. He looks on the Qur'an as a partial revelation, which his inner experience interprets and supplements. Once more the Musalman's failure to recognize a contradiction is apparent. The scholastics either would not or could not perceive how far their logic had carried them. Similarly Sufis, when they express sentiments and beliefs which would have made Muhammad stare and gasp, do not feel that there is any inconsistency in claiming to be his followers. Moreover in the matter of Sufism a further Muhammadan characteristic needs to be remembered. On Muslim lips the language of elevated piety, especially if it be the language of poetry, is not to be taken too seriously. If a man can quote verses, or cap one line with another, he is reckoned a scholar. What the verses precisely mean, or whether they are quite proper for a professed Muslim, does not very much matter. This trait supplies one of the several reasons why the lofty creed of the Sufis has not produced a correspondingly high standard of character and behaviour.

Nobody has yet succeeded in framing a truly adequate definition of mysticism. But the essence of mysticism seems to be a search for the highest reality. The mystic is committed to an endless pilgrimage. Far as he may travel, there is always more beyond. 'Religion is dim,' says Baron von Hügel. And he who described mysticism as a love of haze upon the horizon was not altogether

wrong. Yet at least the haze is luminous. Certainly the Sufis do not agree among themselves as to their aims and methods. When they attempt to define, they usually either make a nebulous statement or offer a picturesque sentence which summarizes a single aspect of the whole. It may also be observed that there is a tendency to stress the element of resignation (*islam*). 'The Sufi is he who is pleased with all that God does, in order that God may be pleased with all that he does.' 'Sufism is to possess nothing, and to be possessed by nothing.' 'Sufism consists in guarding the soul from what is other than God ; and there is nothing other than God.'<sup>3</sup>

The last of these definitions betrays the pantheism which tinges a large part of Sufi speculation. In his reaction from the Qur'an's portrayal of the nature of Allah, the Sufi sought for a personal God, a Guide and Friend. But he was inclined to fall into the error of believing that God is equally present in everything—a theory which obscures, at all events for the human imagination, the Personality of God. Immanence, in the eyes of the Sufi, is a substitute for transcendence, rather than the complement to it. Intimately connected with this pantheistic view is the absence of a true perception of sin and evil. Thus the Sufis, or many of them, are ensnared in a vicious circle. The Qur'an gives them only a light sense of sin, except it be the sin of the Kafir. They proceed to the notion that God is immediately present in all things ; that therefore, in a sense, all things are good. And this belief, in turn, weakens still further their idea of sin and evil as realities to be fought and defeated. Such is one effect of the Qur'an on the somewhat dreamy Persian temperament. And most Sufis are Persians.

But the Sufis may be allowed to speak for themselves. No general description can do justice to their writings, or communicate the flavour of their thoughts. The chief mystical Persian poet is Jalal-ud-din Rumi (1207-1272), founder of that sect of Darweshes whose dancing denotes the wheelings of the planets around the sun, and the attraction of the creature towards the Creator. His

*Mathnavi* (i.e. poem in rhymed distichs) deals with the love of the soul for God. 'Love flies straight to God, outsoaring the intellect.' Sufism is an eclectic collection of beliefs, and has borrowed something from Christianity, although the extent of the borrowing depends on the taste of the individual writer. So Jalal-ud-din says : 'When the fresh breath of Jesus shall touch the heart, it will live and breathe, and blossom again.' 'In each human spirit a Christ is concealed.'

The poet is alive to the dangers of fatalism, and cites with approval the saying of Muhammad : 'Trust in God, yet tie the camel's leg !' Again : 'Your fatalism is sleep on the road. Sleep not, until you behold the gates of the King's palace.' Jalal-ud-din often refers to the mystic path of the Sufi—that sunlit way which mystics of East and West together pursue. It is the way that leads away from self, through repentance, renunciation, trust in God (*tawakkul*), recollection (*zikr*) to ecstasy and union with God. The final stage is *fana*, culminating in *fana al-fana*. This is not quite the same as the Buddhist idea of absorption or annihilation, which must have been familiar to Jalal-ud-din through contact with the Buddhist monastery at Balkh, his native city. *Ba'd al fana, al baqa*. After absorption comes the permanent life in God. So Jalal-ud-din says : 'Come into His workshop, which is not-being (*fana*).'

The Sufis distinguish between ecstasy (*hal*) and the lasting condition or station (*maqam*). The latter is reminiscent of St. Teresa's seventh mansion in the Interior Castle—that tranquil and continuous union in which the will of the mystic, blending with the Divine Will, is not lost, but possessed and dominated by a higher Power. In ecstasy, on the other hand, the Sufi soul is but temporarily caught up to the higher level—'raptus desiderio ad interiorem dulcedinem Dei'. It is related that Jalal-ud-din himself, when in a state of ecstasy, would take hold of a pillar in his house, and begin turning around it, while he dictated poetry. Somewhat similarly Blake attributes certain of his own poems to direct spiritual aid, and observes that he is only the secretary ; the authors are in eternity.

The family likeness between mystics of all countries and all periods is remarkable. The similarity extends even to exaggerations and extravagances. That habit of blurring the distinctions between Creator and creature, to which the critics of mysticism are fond of pointing, and which recurs in Eckart and other German mystics, is particularly noticeable in the Sufis. Hallaj, one of the earliest Sufis, made the audacious declaration, *ana al haqq*, 'I am reality'—almost 'I am God'.<sup>4</sup> A good many Sufis have tried to explain away this apparent blasphemy by suggesting that Hallaj was but expressing in concrete form the Divine Unity wherein subject and object become one, and all seeming opposites are brought into harmony. But language no less wild than that of Hallaj can be found elsewhere in Sufi literature. Bayazid, for example, says: 'I am one with Allah, who is the absolute Unity. I am one with Abraham and Gabriel and Moses, and with the creative Word.'

Jalal-ud-din's views on pain and evil are interesting and characteristic. To him, evil is only relative. 'Serpents' poison is life to serpents.' 'To send evil is one of God's perfections. If He could not paint ugly things, He would lack art. And hence He created Kafirs as well as Muslims.' Both sorts of pictures are equally His handiwork. 'How,' asks the poet, 'could there be temperate and liberal men if there were no accursed Satan to tempt them astray?' Physical pain, likewise, is a favour from God. Pain, according to Jalal-ud-din, is a treasure, for it contains mercies. The noble fortitude that can welcome and transfigure physical suffering has frequently been shown by the greater Sufis, and is quite other than the determination of despair which ordinary fatalism calls forth. It is seen in the eighth-century saint, Rabi'a of Basra, whose spiritual strength made her oblivious to pain. Batja, another ascetic of her time, had her hands and feet cut off by order of the Amir of Basra. When asked about her feelings, she declared: 'Awe of the future has distracted me from the cold of your iron.'<sup>5</sup> One is reminded of St. John of the Cross, who in an exalted moment finds his

soul seized with a strange torment—that of not being allowed to suffer enough. Rabi'a asserts that he is not sincere who does not forget the pain of affliction through his absorption in God. So too Bayazid: 'Sufism consists in forsaking repose, and accepting suffering.' Another Sufi daily prayed for three things: never to be certain of his means of subsistence for the morrow, never to be held in honour among men, and to see the face of God at the hour of death.

The mystic, whether Christian or Muhammadan, is apt to find symbols everywhere. In the case of the Sufis symbolism became to some extent a set of conventions. We miss the depth and richness of a Traherne or a Francis Thompson. Thus the tavern stands for the world, and wine for inspiration. The doves represent holy influences. The camel stands for the journey towards God. Lightning is the manifesting of the Divine Essence. An Arabic proverb states that metaphor is the bridge that leads to reality. Unfortunately many folk loiter on the bridge instead of crossing it. Often, indeed, especially when the imagery takes on an erotic colouring, the reader finds it hard to decide whether the Sufi poet refers to the heavenly love, or the earthly. Ibn al-'Arabi (1165-1240) is a case in point. He claimed that his own writings were no less inspired than the Qur'an, and he exerted a great influence on Persian and Turkish mysticism. His Protean heart could assume every form. 'It is', he says, 'a pasture for gazelles, a convent for monks, a temple for idols, the pilgrim's Ka'aba, the table of the Torah, and the book of the Qur'an.'<sup>6</sup> His is the remarkable saying: 'My beloved is Three, although He is One.' He believed that no form of positive religion contained more than a fraction of truth.<sup>7</sup>

The Darweshes, who are the professional exponents of Sufism, employ various means in order to attain to the high regions of ecstasy and illumination. The principal method is *zikr* (recollection). It consists in ceaseless repetition of the Name of Allah, or of a short text, accompanied by extreme concentration and deep breathing. The Qur'an (13.28) states that remembrance of God (*zikr ullah*) is

repose for the heart. And a favourite tradition of Muhammad says : 'Dreaming is one forty-sixth part of prophecy.' The method of *zikr*, like that of the rosary, rests on a sound psychological basis. But it is considered as beyond the range of the average Muslim, and even as a thing of doubtful orthodoxy. The Darwesh fraternities represent, on the whole, the most advanced type of Sufis. Some of them are even prepared to admit Christians to their ranks. Sufism and official Islam react upon each other, though only too often the sword of the executioner has served as the reply of the orthodox.<sup>8</sup>

Monastic life and discipline contribute to excite and maintain the Darweshes' devotion, although the partial dissolution of the monasteries in Turkey under the new regime has naturally impaired the solidarity of those religious associations. The dress of the Darwesh is an allegory in itself. Members of the Baktashi Order wear mantles decorated with twelve stripes, representing the twelve Imams. The collar and edges of the robe are adorned with Arabic invocations. The four grooves in the Baktashi cap symbolize the four stages of spiritual life. A monastery is self-sufficing, the menial work being done by its members, among whose offices are those of Coffee-maker, Bearer of the Bag, and Sacrificer.<sup>9</sup> Muslim monks are not encouraged to speak much, and must usually express themselves in certain fixed phrases. If, for instance, a disciple makes an offering to his Sheikh, he must use the polite Persian formula, and announce that the ant humbly offers to Solomon the leg of a grasshopper.

But both the Darwesh Orders and Sufism in general display some less innocent traits. A vast number of superstitious beliefs and customs are bound up with the Sufi craze for saints and saint-worship. The pilgrim, when he visits a shrine, addresses the saint in terms which imply that the holy man is still alive, and able to answer the prayers of the devotee. Sometimes the guardians of the tomb act as middle-men between saint and sinner. There is much kissing of thresholds and solemn walking around the shrine.<sup>10</sup>

Akin to the habit of adoring dead saints is the tendency of a certain class of Sufis to find in Muhammad the perfect man (*al insan al kamil*). The deification of the Prophet was elaborately worked out by the Persian poet Jili, who flourished towards the close of the fourteenth century. He gropes after an Incarnation. He believes in the pre-existence of Muhammad. For him the Prophet is the mediator between God and man, the archetype of all creatures, the pole or pivot of the universe, the essence of all that exists, and lord of the angel-world. From the soul of Muhammad, if we may accept the account of Jili, Allah created both good angels and also Satan; the angels typifying Allah's Light and Beauty, and Satan showing a darker attribute of Allah—the power (ascribed in the Qur'an) to mislead whom He will.<sup>11</sup> This esoteric teaching of Jili, not without its pathos for a Christian reader, was largely caviare to the general. The point to be noted is that the Sufi must have his superman, his divine or semi-divine agent and intercessor.

Sometimes the Darwesh sets up as a magician, and dispenses charms and talismans. Belief in such things is intimately connected with the supposed existence of good and evil Jinns. Each of the four elements is presided over by spirits, and every letter of the Arabic alphabet has its own Jinn, who can be invoked when required. If the Darwesh turns healer, he generally makes the sick man swallow a tiny piece of paper inscribed with a verse of the Qur'an.

The chief virtue of Sufism lies in the fact that it helps to dispel Muslim prejudice against the unbeliever. It makes for an attitude of quietism. In theory at least, it incites its adherents to philanthropy. An early Sufi writer said that the best and easiest way of reaching God was to bring joy to the heart of a Muslim.<sup>12</sup>

Still, it may be questioned whether the motive which Sufism supplies for well-doing has much actual force. The deficient consciousness of sin precludes humility, the ground of all the virtues. The Sufi hardly succeeds in shaking off Muslim self-conceit. Possibly he adds to it.



For he considers himself as one of the elect, and his saints as the elect of the elect (*khusus al khusus*). He has the superior knowledge. 'Woe to him who bases his convictions on syllogisms', cries Ibn al 'Arabi, 'for they are always open to attack. The true faith is the intuitive faith, which is above contradiction.' Likewise Rabi'a, asked by a friend how she arrived at her knowledge of God, replied: 'Thou hast known after a method, and through certain means, but I immediately.'

She was one of those rare spirits that refuse to be puffed up by the possession of such superior knowledge. Rabi'a was convinced that sin, being a cause of separation between the soul and its Beloved, is utterly ruinous.<sup>13</sup> Not many Sufis have learnt the same lesson. In the Qur'an (75.2) there is a passing reference to 'the self-blaming soul', which accuses its own self whenever Allah is disobeyed, or duty neglected. This is perhaps the nearest approach on the part of Muhammad to the idea of conscience. But he did not expand or develop this conception, and it remained unfruitful. So the Muslim mystic has generally wrapped himself too closely in the mantle of serene self-satisfaction, and swathed his head too tightly in the turban of unctuous virtue. He builds his tabernacle on the heights. Seldom do we discern in him the missionary zeal and healthy social activity of the kind which prompted Ramon Lull to forsake the 'vistas de esposos' for the task of converting the Moors, or Catherine of Sienna to nurse the plague-stricken, or even the sombre Suso to issue from his cell and minister to the poverty around him. There is a whole world of difference between Christian and Muhammadan mysticism, scarcely to be disguised by the many superficial resemblances which they exhibit to each other. Somebody said it is better to feed the hungry than to see the visions of St. Paul. An 'ingenium spiritualiter aureum' may accomplish both.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARTS AND SCIENCES

EVERY religion is bound to express itself in artistic forms. Art, like murder, will out. And a religion, no less than a civilization, can to a certain extent be tested by its art. One feels that a faith which can produce great art must contain within itself some secret depth of goodness. The fact is frequently emphasized, that Muhammadan art is second-hand. Ibn Khaldun states that the Arabs employed the Persian people to serve them, and to teach them the arts and architecture. He also says that the Khalif Walid ibn 'Abdul Malik sent to the Emperor at Constantinople for skilled workmen to build mosques at Medina, Jerusalem and Damascus.<sup>1</sup> Much doubtless was in the first instance borrowed from Byzantine, Coptic and Indian sources. Yet it may justly be affirmed that the Muslims transmuted their borrowings, and made them their own. Plagiarism is often justified by results. The world knows what the Greeks made of their crude Egyptian and Cretan models. Christian art consented to put the pagan basilica to a heavenly use, and to convert the seat of the Praetor into the Bishop's throne. The origin of many lovely things is far from respectable.

From Muhammad and the Qur'an art received less than no encouragement. There is scarcely anything in the book to suggest that the Prophet had a real feeling for art. His attitude was the direct outcome of his view of Allah. He could not understand how God must be Perfect Beauty as well as Absolute Power. No more could he, believing what he did, envisage the artist as one who strives to express some fragment of the ideal beautiful. The Qur'an (5.90) includes *ansab* with wine and gambling in the catalogue of things unlawful to the believer. The word is

derived from the root *nasab*, 'he erected', and probably referred originally to columns set up by heathen Arabs in connexion with a religious cult. At all events, the prohibition was interpreted as aimed against all statues, images and portraits. Muhammad is also reported to have said : 'Angels will not enter a house containing a dog or pictures', and even : 'Every painter will be in hell'.<sup>2</sup> Blind to the unity of art, the Prophet tolerated architecture and poetry, while yet he banned painting and images. His hatred of any likeness of a human being was caught, apparently, from the Jews, though he probably did not know that Pharisees and Sadducees were divided on this point. In spite of the apotheosis which Muhammad has received among many Musalmans, it has generally been thought improper to delineate his features ; and very few ancient portraits of him are extant.

Persia, heretic always, set at naught the Prophet's prohibition. But elsewhere the whim of Muhammad helped to suppress or paralyse artistic instinct. In the adorning of the mosque flowery ornament had to accomplish the function which belongs to pictures and statues. Muhammad had such an extreme dread of idolatry that he could scent an idol in every statue and portrait. Such, at least, was the view of his Sunni followers. And it is interesting to observe that a century later the iconoclastic Emperor Leo the Third was taunted with deriving his ideas from the Arabian Antichrist, against whom he had been fighting. Images might have helped to give the Muslim a nobler ideal of man. In the Middle Ages the *Biblia Pauperum*, together with Passion Plays and Miracle Plays, contributed appreciably towards keeping Christianity alive.

The architect, at all events, remained unfettered. Before Islam the Arab tribes had no occasion for permanent edifices, except in the few towns then existing. The nomads wandered ceaselessly. Legend speaks of castles and palaces fortified by the Kings of Hira. But these have left no trace. The earliest Muhammadan Arabs do not seem to have been much impressed with the necessity of

making the *masjid* (place of prostration) worthy of Allah. When, however, country after country yielded to their arms, large numbers of buildings came into their possession. These they were often content to employ for the purpose of public prayers.<sup>3</sup> Gradually, a distinctive style emerged. The archetype of all mosques was Muhammad's mosque at Medina, the roof of which was supported by palm-stems. Another very early mosque, that of Kufa, boasted of marble columns. Half temple, half citadel, it was surrounded by a trench instead of a wall, and its length was a single bowshot. So too, in the ninth-century mosque at Samarra, on the Tigris, Islam showed her militant aspect; for the walls had bastions.<sup>4</sup> It is also to be remarked that *mihrab*, the name for the prayer-niche (possibly imitated from the Christian apse) is connected with the word for war (*harb*). The whole mosque, in fact, constituted a kind of drill-hall—an illuminating confirmation of the theory that Islam cannot flourish apart from war.

The surviving masterpieces of Muslim architecture, whether in India, Palestine, Egypt or Spain, all bear the same characteristic stamp. No doubt minor differences occur. Arches in the Alhambra are not quite the same type as those of Damascus or Delhi. And the minarets of Cairo display more elaboration than the chaster specimens of India. Such structures as the Mausoleum of Timur at Samarkand, and other remains in Central Asia, strike a discordant note. In Chinese Turkestan, as also in Java, the Muhammadan manner has degenerated through the influence of local surroundings. In China itself most of the mosques are frankly Chinese in conception and style.<sup>5</sup> When the Muslims are greatly outnumbered, their want of artistic imagination reasserts itself. Yet, with these exceptions, mosques in their main features are wonderfully alike. The uniformity may be traced to the interchange of workmen, and also to the standardizing influence of Mecca and the pilgrimage. Beholding the so-called synagogue at Toledo, a Moorish edifice, the spectator might readily think himself in a room of the

Fort at Agra. The general outline of the mosque is a constant, unvarying factor—a parable of the Muslim intellect, which progresses up to a point, and then obstinately refuses to advance. Nothing comparable with the stately development of Gothic is found in the architectural history of Islam. Had not Muhammad with his own hands helped in erecting the first mosque? What better model could the Muslim desire?

Yet the presence of a spiritual element in Muhammadan architecture is undeniable. Strength and simplicity are the principal features. Supreme architecture conveys a hint of the infinite. The smooth dome of mosque or tomb—our cupola is the Arabic word *qubba*—is the vault of the sky in miniature, an effort to accommodate to mortal vision the vastness of heaven, where dwells the One God. The persistence of the dome, as the paramount feature of Islamic building, thus reflects Islam's outstanding doctrine of *tauhid*, or the all-embracing unity of Allah. So also in the soaring minarets we may, without undue fancifulness, discover the Muslim's aspiration towards God, the desire to reach Him through prayer and praise. The simplicity of line is eloquent of reserve and restraint. But where ornament, in contrast with outline, is concerned, the exuberant inventiveness of the architect, provided it deals in flowers and not persons, is allowed full play. The floral patterns which deck the walls of Mughal palaces, the delicate filigree of stone lattices, the inlaid work of the pavements, express the need for richness in art, and the natural desire for variety and multiplicity. Sometimes the very lavishness of the designs becomes overpowering, since it affords no rest to the eye. The 'horror vacui' is overdone.

Much of Muhammadan architecture gives the impression of squatness and solid strength, and has something in common with the Norman style. Few of the buildings achieve the sense of height, though the Great Mosque of Damascus may be counted an exception. Frequently the minaret looks like an afterthought, a mere adjunct or appendix to the vault—not, as it were, growing out of the main edifice with the naturalness of a Gothic spire.

Here recurs yet again the disjunctive working of the Muslim brain, its defective power of synthesis. An isolated tower, like the Qutb Minar, or its Bukharan brother, the Kalyan Minaret, so utterly dwarfing the adjacent mosque, may be beautiful in detail, but is out of proportion, and suggests height and nothing besides.

Still, how many Muhammadan edifices there are, which almost defy criticism! Few will dispute the claim of the Taj Mahal, where nature and art meet in such wondrous harmony, to be the most glorious tomb in the world. Perhaps a Venetian designed it. But none the less it belongs to Islam. The glittering Dome of the Rock, and its neighbour the Most Distant Mosque, whence the Templars got their name, owe still more to Christian art.<sup>6</sup> But the splendid massive walls which surround the inner city of Jerusalem are purely Saracenic art, and the Damascus Gate recalls the genius of Sulaiman the Magnificent.

The architecture of the Moors lacked something of the grandeur of the Byzantine-Arab style, but compensated for this by new features. The mosque of Cordova, begun by that lover of the arts, 'Abdur Rahman I in the year 784, is probably the first in which superposed arches were employed. With its maze of columns and arcades, its ornaments of gold and ivory, its glass mosaics, its brazen lamps made from Christian bells (those bells which Muhammad so detested), its courtyards and fountains, the Cordovan mosque retains its rank among the fairest products of human art. And the Court of the Lions at Granada belongs to the same select company. Thus the Saracens succeeded in evolving a definite order of architecture, not unworthy to be counted with Grecian and Gothic among the modes of expressing spirit through the medium of brick and stone. Upon the heritage that came to her from older civilizations Islam left her own graceful and enduring mark.

Muslims have seldom been guilty of vandalism. The case of Ba'albek is exceptional. There the tops of a number of fine Roman pillars were cut off, in order to provide the

supports for an unimpressive mosque. The Turks, in return for a bribe, allowed some of the chief treasures of the site to be removed to Germany, and during the war they stripped the splendid temples of their iron clamps. More often, in India at least, one encounters the passive vandalism which is content to look with unconcern on gems of art mouldering to slow decay. Muslim fatalism is apt to result in an inactivity by no means masterly ; and the task of arresting the course of ruin is too often left to an alien government. It is the infidel spade, likewise, which must bring to light the buried cities of Muslim lands. Archaeology, as a rule, lies outside the ken of the Musalman.

The painting of the Muhammadans is inferior to their masonry. Fortunately in India and Persia there were those who refused to take seriously the Prophet's denunciation of artists. Yet by his attitude he must have robbed posterity of a vast amount of both sculpture and portraiture. One extraordinary defect is apparent in all Muslim pictures—the almost total absence of perspective. Why the painters did not discover it for themselves, or why they failed to discern the enormous difference which perspective effected in Western art, stays a mystery. So their work never escapes the sense of flatness. None of their figures threatens to walk out of the canvas. The mirror which they hold up to Nature is a distorting reflector. But the colouring is delightful, and testifies to the highest taste. Also much of the painting is distinguished by a quaint grace, that dimly recalls a leading feature of the Dutch School. Where, as often, the picture includes a crowd of people, little or no attempt is evident to arrange them in an artistic group. Foreground and background become hopelessly mixed. So the picture, at a glance, tends to resemble a play in which is neither hero nor villain, and wherein all the actors are on the same monotonous level. Most painters of Muhammadan court scenes appear to have thought that, so long as the monarch was duly differentiated, one face was as good as another. Often the margins of the picture are occupied with Persian verses explaining the theme.

Early Persian painting is believed to have owed something to the art fostered by the Nestorian and Jacobite Churches of the ancient Persian Empire. Another influence came from the traditions of the Sassanids, whose reigns appealed so strongly to the nationalist spirit of the Persians. These kings were accustomed to have their portraits woven into their garments. But in Persian estimation the father of painting was Mani, founder of the Manichæan sect. Around his name gathered many legends, and the term *artang*, variously denoting Mani's house, his book of drawings, or even the artist himself (such is the confusion of the Iranian mind), constantly occurs in Persian poetry. The Mongol invaders, moreover, brought with them numbers of Chinese painters, who added the dragon and other conventional designs to the artistic commonplaces of the conquered. At times there emerged an artist who could better portray individuality. Such was Bihzad, who about the year 1500 brought the painting of miniatures to a high pitch of excellence. According to the opinion of his biographer, his skill vied with that of Mani, and obliterated the memorials of all other painters. Like the majority of artists in those days, he depended for his livelihood on the royal favour, although occasionally he had to submit to seeing his pictures altered by royal fingers. A good painter counted as a valuable asset, and we are told that Shah Isma'il, when starting on his campaign against the Turks, caused Bihzad to be carefully hidden away, and enquired eagerly for him on his return.<sup>7</sup>

The history of Indian Muslim painting is inseparably linked with the Mughal dynasty. The Memoirs of Babar indicate that he prided himself on being a competent art critic. He liberally encouraged artists. Akbar, true to his name, surpassed all the other Emperors in this respect. A real enthusiast, he used to arrange weekly exhibitions, at which he was both judge and prize-giver. But he is chiefly remarkable for his recognition of art as the handmaid of religion. Akbar is recorded to have said that a painter has special means of recognizing God, because in the effort to portray personality he is made to feel his own



limitations, and is thus driven to think of God as the Giver of life.<sup>8</sup> There Akbar utters a sentiment which Muhammad would have neither comprehended nor endorsed. But Akbar could never have been 'persona grata' to the Prophet. The tame Jesuits with whom Akbar discussed religion were no doubt responsible for the pictures of New Testament scenes in Mughal settings, which have not yet faded from the palace walls in Fathpur Sikri.

A few subjects chosen by Muslim painters may be enumerated, since they afford valuable evidence of thought and manners. Sometimes the picture suggests Shi'ah propaganda, as when Muhammad, laying his hand on the shoulder of 'Ali, declares him his successor. Here is a poet on bended knee, presenting his writings to a patron. There a prince, equally a suppliant, introduces his fairy bride to his father. A faithful wife is seen with a rope, rescuing her artist husband, who was thrust into a dungeon for fraud. A starveling Jew, in a blue robe, holds in his hand a book for divining. Alexander (ubiquitous among Muslims) enters the lecture-room of a religious teacher, who has rendered his hearers unconscious, as a punishment for their inattention. Abraham is angrily breaking in pieces his father's idols. Muhammad in a pulpit preaches his farewell sermon. Hunting-scenes abound, and favourite subjects are the exploits of the real or legendary heroes of Persia, such as Bahram Gur and Rustam.<sup>9</sup>

The copying and binding of the Qur'an received no less care than that which Christian monks devoted to transcripts of the Bible. Muslim passion for perfection of detail decreed that calligraphy should be reckoned one of the fine arts. And whether in the form of Kufic inscriptions on stone, or as an adornment of the written page, well-executed Arabic script wears an artistic and distinguished air. On the other hand, Persians commonly use the *shikasta* or broken script, in which the dots of the letters are frequently omitted or misplaced, the consonants are not properly differentiated from each other, and letters which should be separate are joined. The writing sprawls into the margin at the end of a line ; and the higher it mounts the

less legible it becomes. This method of writing not seldom causes even the Persians to be puzzled. Yet for centuries Muhammadans were prejudiced against printing, especially of the Qur'an.<sup>10</sup>

The Muslim's love of graceful detail and small prettinesses caused him to excel in the minor decorative arts. In the making of tiles, pottery, and lustre-ware the Persians had few equals. Something no doubt they borrowed from China, but they formed a style of their own, which influenced the ceramic art throughout Turkey, Egypt and Spain. Generally the scheme of decoration is floral. The beautiful tiled walls of the mosque of Sultan Ahmad at Constantinople are a typical instance of the Persian influence.<sup>11</sup>

Berber decoration presents a curious problem. The Berbers steadily avoid the delineation of plants and flowers, and confine themselves to geometrical designs—often, it must be admitted, of considerable beauty. Two explanations have been offered of this phenomenon. First, it is suggested that the animism of the Berbers came in the way. Their idea may have been that if they made a likeness of any live and growing thing, they would unloose hidden forces against themselves. The demon of the copied plant would haunt the maker of the copy. Another and simpler theory suggests that the fondness of the Berber for rectilinear patterns is to be attributed to his inertia.<sup>12</sup> Straight lines save trouble. Applied to Kufic script, this method robs it of all beauty. But in carpets and embroideries, as also in metal and leather work, it can become attractive.

Muhammad and the stricter sort of his disciples had arbitrary and inconsistent ideas about art. They thought of the arts separately, and solemnly judged each of them on its merits. But they do not seem to have constructed any philosophy of art as a whole, or to have seen any contradiction between their approval of one branch of art and their condemnation of another. If the recorded traditions are a reliable guide, the Prophet was undecided in his mind concerning the merits of music. One of his sayings is thus reported: 'Listening to music is a crime against the

law ; making music is an offence against religion ; to take pleasure in music is a sin against faith'. Musicians in his day, apparently, were mostly slaves. Two of these, who sang satirical songs about Muhammad, were by his orders put to death. But there is some evidence on the other side. The Prophet is believed to have countenanced the use of music at weddings and feasts. Tradition also tells us that he listened patiently to an Abyssinian orchestra in the Meccan mosque, and that he rebuked Abu Bakr, who desired to expel some minstrels.<sup>13</sup>

Muhammad's uncertainty is reflected in the conflicting views of music which were expressed by later Muslims. The Syrian poet Abu'l 'Ala exclaimed : 'May the One God guard us from attending concerts and music !' Persians took a more liberal line. Ghazali impartially sums up the case for and against music. 'Jalal-ud-din Rumi writes : 'Since we are all members of Adam, we have heard these melodies in Paradise. Listening to music is lovers' food, for it recalls to them their original union with God.'<sup>14</sup> Here is a beautiful hint of the heavenly character of music, a feeling after that celestial harmony which Plato nearly heard—the music of the spheres.

Under the early Khalifs music was duly honoured. According to one account, the court circle of Samarra was divided into two factions by the rival claims of a pair of handsome singing-girls. Harun-ar-Rashid caused a collection of the hundred most popular airs to be compiled. Indeed the taste for music at that period was evident among all classes of the Muslim community.<sup>15</sup>

Instrumental music employed the four-stringed lute (to which a Cordovan composer added a fifth string), the guitar, and the flute. Muslims judge music by its technique. Their musical theory was partly borrowed from the Greek, and has little in common with modern European styles. The harmony is of the most elementary type. A few of the melodies are capable of pleasing a Western ear, and the refrain of *taza ba taza, nau ba nau*, a favourite with the Indian Musalman, might be appreciated in an English nursery. Several songs have Muhammad or 'Ali for themes,

but there is no separate system of religious music. In refusing to join music to worship, the Prophet missed a great opportunity. Musalmans are themselves aware of the deep influence which music can wield. They have sometimes made even extravagant claims for it. One early writer believed that music healed disease. He says: 'It purifies the blood, calms the mind, makes all the limbs to tremble, and frees their movements'.<sup>16</sup> Muslims are always inclined to think that the best music must exercise a tremendous effect on the emotions. Nowhere in Islam's realm is music more appreciated than in Morocco, where no social function is complete without players and singers, whose ballads recall wistful memories of Andalusia, and the glorious nights of Granada, or celebrate the praises of the Marabouts.<sup>17</sup>

The Darweshes, at least, have made an attempt to supply the gap in the Muslim mentality, and to find a religious use for music. In the ritual of the Mevlavi Order, the service commences with a mystic hymn, followed by the chanting of the first Sura of the Qur'an. Then, while the musicians play a slow march, the Darweshes move in procession thrice round the room. The high notes of the reed-flute next invite them to begin the dance, and the dull thud of the drum accentuates the rhythm. With minds fixed on the *zikr*, the devotees whirl and whirl, until they attain the mystic trance, whence the Sheikh recalls them with such words as these: 'The man of God is exalted without wine. He is beyond good and evil. He has ridden away to the place where all is one'.<sup>18</sup> So the Darwesh obtains, with the aid of music, a foretaste of that absorption in Allah, which is the goal of his desire. But what is good for the Darwesh may not be good for everyone.

In regard to dramatic art also, it is the heretics who help to humanize Islam. Persians are extremely fond of the theatre. Their plays deal usually with the distant past, lest they should allow themselves to become forgetful of the origins of the Shi'ah faith. The persecution suffered by Shi'ahs under the 'Abbasid Khalifs is a favourite topic. But most of all they love to go back in fancy to the Battle

of Kerbela, and are never tired of hearing about the sufferings of their ancient saints. In the course of the performance a Mullah explains or paraphrases the plot, and curses the tyrant Khalifs. The crowd is worked up to a frenzy. They sigh and sob, and beat their breasts, and cry : 'Husain, Husain'. The actors who take the invidious rôles are sometimes unable to speak for weeping. They are expected to show their arrogance in their voices ; whereas those who represent the martyrs express themselves in song or droning dirge.<sup>19</sup> The grief excited by these plays is more national than religious in character, and is closely allied to hatred of the Sunnis. Other subjects of Persian dramas include the death of Muhammad, the death of Fatima, and the marriage of Solomon with Bilqis, Queen of Sheba.<sup>20</sup>

In the sphere of physical science, the principal achievements of the Muslims relate to mathematics. The spirit of enquiry and research, in contrast with mere curiosity, is not a characteristic feature of Islam. Some allowance also should be made for the influence of Aristotle. The excessive reverence accorded to that philosopher had the effect of retarding scientific discovery. He was supposed to have said the last word on whatever subject he treated. To what extent the religion of the Muslims can properly be held responsible for their lack of scientific productiveness during the last two centuries, is difficult to determine. Certainly, in face of the example set by Europe, Islam must in part be held responsible, if only on account of her failure to inspire educational ideals. It may be contended that religion cannot make a scientist, any more than it can produce a master musician. Yet religion, if it is of the right kind, can emancipate the intellect, and create an atmosphere favourable to experiment and investigation.

The Arabs lost no time in translating the Elements of Euclid into their own language. The so-called Arabic numerals, together with arithmetic, including the decimal system, were imported from India in the ninth century. Algebra (*al jabr*), if not actually invented by the Arabs, owes to them much of its early development. To them we

are indebted for the conceptions of sine, cosine, and tangent. Al Beruni, the famous traveller, who lived at the court of Mahmud of Ghazni about 1000 A.D., introduced trigonometry. In his book on the Hindus he tells, not without conceit, how at first he had a slight difficulty in grasping Hindu mathematics and astronomy, but that very soon he was instructing their professors as though they were mere children.<sup>21</sup> The text-book of algebra, which had been composed in the time of the Khalif Ma'mun, based on the work of Muhammad ibn Musa, was eventually translated into Latin, and served as a manual for the schools of Europe. 'Umar Khayyam (d. 1123) is more renowned in the East for his mathematics than his poetry. He showed men how to solve equations of the third and fourth degree. Mechanics too received some attention from the Saracens. We are even told of a Moorish engineer who invented a flying-machine, and after initial success came to grief.<sup>22</sup>

In astronomy, similarly, the Arabs gained distinction. True, they never quite comprehended the fact that astronomy and astrology are two different things. A chief aim of the early Muslim astronomers was to ascertain the exact hours for the official prayers, and the precise direction of Mecca. They were also concerned to discover from the stars what would be the duration of the Muhammadan Empire.<sup>23</sup> Yet the Arabs did find out a great deal. In the reign of Khalif Ma'mun they revised the astronomical tables of Ptolemy, making simultaneous observations at Baghdad and Damascus. They invented the astrolabe for measuring altitudes, they could determine the degrees of the meridian and the obliquity of the ecliptic. Nor did they omit to observe carefully the appearance of comets and eclipses, and even sun-spots.<sup>24</sup> Some Muslim astronomers actually suspected the movement of the earth about the sun. But the Qur'an deterred them from proclaiming the fact.

Astronomical studies naturally gave an impetus to geographical science. The Arabs adopted the Chinese compass, and wrote several treatises on geography. Ibn Battuta travelled extensively in Asia and Africa. He is

said to have been the only medieval voyager who visited all the Muhammadan countries of his time. But being obsessed with a sense of his own worth he took more interest in courts and princes than in recording accurate details of the various kingdoms. It is characteristic of Ibn Battuta that he was singularly free from anti-Christian prejudice, and did not consider that he would be defiled if he sailed in a Greek vessel.<sup>25</sup> More methodical is the work of Yaqut ibn 'Abdullah (1179-1229), a Greek slave, who was brought up as a Muhammadan at Baghdad. His ambitious Gazetteer is a remarkable anticipation of modern geographical science.<sup>26</sup>

The study of medicine among the Muslims was handicapped partly by their excessive veneration for Hippocrates and Galen, partly by their inability to divorce medicine from magic. Further, the dissecting of a human body was thought to be contrary to religion, as interfering with the rights of the grave-angels, and therefore anatomy was utterly neglected. Avicenna wrote a medical treatise, wherein he laid great stress on experience.<sup>27</sup> It seems strange that neither he nor the many other philosophers who posed as physicians should have insisted on the importance of anatomy and physiology. Medicine at best is largely an empirical science, but for the Muslims it was nothing else.

To a Persian of the ninth century, Ar Razi, belongs the credit of discovering smallpox, a disease not known to the ancient Greeks. But the main distinction achieved by Arabian medicine lay in the discovery of drugs. The Arabs had a nodding acquaintance with chemistry, and succeeded in ascertaining the properties of mineral acids and other chemical substances, the knowledge of which they passed on to Europe. They also became familiar with a number of poisons and their antidotes.<sup>28</sup>

Musalman are, on the whole, renowned for their care of the sick. As early as the year 980 there stood a hospital at Baghdad—an immense palace, with many separate wards. Twice every week the city physicians visited the patients, who received food and medicine gratis. The

medical school attached to this hospital flourished for several centuries.<sup>29</sup> We learn too of a luxurious hospital at Marrakesh in the twelfth century, where each patient was charged thirty dinars a day, in addition to the fees for drugs. However, concessions were made to the poor, and these, after their discharge from the institution, received a dole until they were able to resume work.<sup>30</sup>

A less pleasing account comes from Tripoli, some five hundred years later. There the Moors applied cautery in the case of nearly every malady. To a man suffering from a high fever they would give a dish of onions and red pepper, so that remedy was apt to be more fatal than ailment, and many a patient died of his physician. 'When a person is thought to be dying, he is immediately surrounded by his friends, who begin to scream in the most hideous manner, to convince him there is no more hope, and that he is already reckoned amongst the dead'. And the haste with which the bodies were washed and buried resulted in not a few being entombed alive.<sup>31</sup>

The Arabs, while displaying considerable reverence for the physician, were wont to enter into preliminary bargains with him, on the understanding that nothing should be payable except in the event of recovery. Palgrave notes their want of perseverance in following the course prescribed by the doctor. The Arab patient wanted quick results, and if these failed to arrive in time he would 'throw physic to the dogs', and take refuge in resignation. Secondary causes were hardly understood, and every disease was supposed to be the direct work of Allah.<sup>32</sup>

In the matter of hygiene Muhammadan practice is a bundle of inconsistencies. The Prophet's insistence on bodily cleanliness as a necessary preliminary to prayer has had a most wholesome effect. And in an age when Christendom seemed to believe that piety and dirt were first cousins, the Musalman washed himself assiduously. From Syria the Muslims borrowed the Greek method of bathing, whence came Turkish baths.<sup>33</sup> Against this homage paid to hygienic principles must be set the lamentable indifference of Muslims in the presence of epidemic



disease. In accordance with Muhammad's command, they deem it irreligious to flee from a plague-stricken quarter, and have no idea of the imperative necessity of isolating patients afflicted with infectious disease. Nor are they unduly alarmed by the fact that the pilgrim-ships carry the germs of cholera from Mecca to every Muhammadan land. The value of inoculation and vaccination is imperfectly appreciated. In India, however, a Muhammadan cultivator, who would refuse to let the lymph invade himself, is often perfectly willing to have his cattle inoculated against anthrax.

The injunctions in the Qur'an against certain kinds of food are copied mainly from the Mosaic code. Sura 5.5 permits Muslims to eat the food of 'those who have been given the book', that is, Jews and Christians. As to the question whether an animal slaughtered by a Christian in the Name of Jesus may be eaten by a Muslim, the schools of law are divided.<sup>34</sup> Indian Muhammadan servants of the superior type generally profess to be averse from eating the remains of meals served to their English masters.

Modern sanitation is unknown to Muhammadan countries, except where it has been introduced by foreign agency. Even then, it is regarded by most as a costly and superfluous luxury. A few years ago, the appointing of sanitary inspectors in Egypt caused considerable resentment. The citizen of Cairo deemed it an infringement of his private rights that he should not be allowed to do as he liked with his own rubbish, or to bury a dead goat in his compound. In Persia the washing of corpses in a running stream, which supplies drinking-water further down, is thought neither unhealthy nor indelicate.

## CHAPTER XII

### ETHICAL AND MENTAL TRAITS

THE view which a religion takes of the status of woman inevitably colours all the moral characteristics it serves to produce. In the Qur'an (4.34) it is stated : 'Men are standing above women by reason of the qualities with which Allah has endowed some above others, and because of what they spend out of their property for them.' The modern apologists for Islam do not altogether relish this passage. Thus the editor of the Ahmadiya translation gives the meaning as : 'Men are the maintainers of women.'<sup>1</sup> It is extremely doubtful whether this signification can be attached to the term '*qawwam*', which is derived from the root *qam*, 'he stood upright'. Both Sale and Rodwell consider that the phrase in question denotes superiority.

A favourite topic of conversation among the Arabs is the worthlessness of the female sex.<sup>2</sup> Although women were not excluded by Muhammad from public prayer, he thought it better that they should pray in private. But the presence of women in mosques has, until recent times, been discouraged.<sup>3</sup> Those who attempted to discard the veil usually met with short shrift. When the Mahdi, Ibn Tumart, saw the sister of the Amir of Morocco riding in public without a veil, he assailed her with abuse, and dragged her to earth.

Still, Muslim history does provide examples of a higher ideal of womanhood. Jalal-ud-din Rumi, influenced doubtless by Christian ideas, could write : 'Woman is the brilliance of God, not a mere mistress. Thou mightest say she is a creator, not a creature.' Among the mystics the woman saint early made her appearance, and by means of her obvious piety, added to the independence resulting from celibacy, won universal recognition.<sup>4</sup> The renowned Rabi'a was but the chief among many of a

similar kind. In Western Arabia, also, women have resolutely declined the veil, and have throughout enjoyed equality with men.

In modern Turkey, and to a lesser extent in Egypt, the feminist movement has made great strides. But this is not the work of Islam. During the Great War the women of Turkey made munitions and nursed the sick. To-day they go everywhere with their husbands. One reads of an editor being sentenced to imprisonment for publishing a satire on the modern woman—a curious example of tyranny exercised in the name of newly-won liberty. Husbands attending a post-war dance at Konia without their wives were cross-examined, and unless they had sound excuses, were dismissed to their homes.<sup>5</sup> In Egypt, too, the social life of the woman is now far less restrained than formerly. They share in public affairs, and are studying for most of the professions which are open to women in the West. Even Persia has begun to move in the same direction, although the change is as yet limited in the main to the capital, where there are more girls at school than in the whole of the provinces.<sup>6</sup> Among the millions of Muhammadan women in India the position remains very much the same as in the past. A few women of the upper classes are less strictly veiled, and may be described as only half-purdah. But the vast majority maintain the system of seclusion. The late Begum of Bhopal, a most wise and enlightened ruler, who bequeathed her vast fortune for the propagation of Islam, was entirely veiled when she appeared in public.

The system of the veil is based on a low view of human nature. The Turks, as Busbecq remarks, were convinced that no woman who possessed the slightest attractions of beauty or youth could be seen by a man without exciting his desires.<sup>7</sup> Until recently, that was the attitude of all Muhammadan races. To quote Jalal-ud-din once more, 'woman is partial evil, lust universal evil.'<sup>8</sup> But the Muslim, instead of facing and conquering the evil desire, tries to put himself in a situation where the temptation cannot assail him. On the one hand, polygamy and the easiness of

divorce offer him the utmost lawful indulgence. On the other, every sight of a veiled woman reminds him of what is forbidden, and sets his imagination at work. The surest way to make people untrustworthy is to show them that they are not trusted. The Arabian Nights, and much else in Muhammadan literature, indicate that the object of the veil has not been attained.

It might have been expected that through the absence of intellectual companionship between the sexes, and the withdrawal of women from open social life, the Muslim world would have become excessively hard and callous, and deficient in the more feminine virtues. The Qur'an, although it seldom approaches the ideal of Christian charity, does in places inculcate the spirit of mercy and forgiveness. Sura 42.40 states: 'Whoever forgives and is reconciled, he shall have his reward from Allah.' Yet the preceding verse commends those who redress themselves when injured. Muhammad is credited with observing: 'Paradise is for those who bridle their anger', and again: 'There is no man who receives a bodily injury and forgives the offender but God will exalt his rank, and diminish his sin.'<sup>9</sup>

The perpetual feuds between tribe and tribe in Arabia, though in some sense a pastime to vary the sameness of desert existence, are kept alive by the lust for revenge. It has been seriously suggested that this propensity among the Arabs is due to their large consumption of the milk and and flesh of the camel, a beast notorious for its vindictive disposition. But if the game of revenge were allowed to run its course absolutely unchecked, the position would become intolerable. Hence a number of unwritten laws are observed, which modify the severity of this domestic warfare. A man who falls from his horse must not be attacked. But if he fires on a mounted enemy, it is murder. When a camp is raided, shots may not be fired into the tents. If, moreover, one Bedouin has a death-feud with another, he must not kill him by means of ambush, but announce his arrival with a shout. Nor may a man be slain in his sleep. Prisoners are treated as guests, and later

allowed to ride home on their own captured camels, which must, however, be afterwards returned to the captors.<sup>10</sup> These rules are obeyed with the utmost scrupulousness. A Bedouin who dares to transgress the code blackens not only his own name, but the reputation of his whole tribe. With all their roughness and barbarism, the Arabs of Arabia have probably a keener sense of fair play than any other Muslim people, and evince a more sporting and gentlemanly spirit. Just there, no doubt, lies the reason why they have succeeded in attracting and even fascinating so many of the best sort of Englishmen, who, for the sake of studying their customs, have consented to share the rigour of their daily life.

A Christian once said to a Muslim: 'Islam, unlike Christendom, possesses not the love of one's neighbour.' The answer was: 'Islam possesses *ihsan*; and this means actual practice of neighbourly love, whereas the Christian ideal signifies merely a sentiment which one man entertains towards another, inasmuch as he wishes him well. Hence we Muslims have a higher moral ideal than Christendom.' The pious Musalman who hears of men and women dying of starvation in European cities is shocked beyond measure at the apparent want of pity, and becomes further fortified in his conviction about the superiority of his own creed.<sup>11</sup>

The annals of Islam can show striking examples of humanity and magnanimity, which may fairly be set off against the monotonous list of massacres and cruelties wherewith those pages are stained. In the Crusades Islam frequently appeared more Christian in action than the Christians themselves. And the extraordinary mercy and forbearance of Saladin after the victory of Hattin present a vivid contrast with the treachery of the Frankish leaders. The rule of the Moors in Spain produced several instances of a like phenomenon. In the tenth century Cordova was the home of a chivalrous ideal which anticipated the knightly devotion of the medieval Christian warrior. During the days of the Almoravids a notable incident occurred, eloquent of the high standard of honour which prevailed. The Moors laid siege to the fortress of

divorce offer him the utmost lawful indulgence. On the other, every sight of a veiled woman reminds him of what is forbidden, and sets his imagination at work. The surest way to make people untrustworthy is to show them that they are not trusted. The Arabian Nights, and much else in Muhammadan literature, indicate that the object of the veil has not been attained.

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The perpetual feuds between tribe and tribe in Arabia, though in some sense a pastime to vary the sameness of desert existence, are kept alive by the lust for revenge. It has been seriously suggested that this propensity among the Arabs is due to their large consumption of the milk and and flesh of the camel, a beast notorious for its vindictive disposition. But if the game of revenge were allowed to run its course absolutely unchecked, the position would become intolerable. Hence a number of unwritten laws are observed, which modify the severity of this domestic warfare. A man who falls from his horse must not be attacked. But if he fires on a mounted enemy, it is murder. When a camp is raided, shots may not be fired into the tents. If, moreover, one Bedouin has a death-feud with another, he must not kill him by means of ambush, but announce his arrival with a shout. Nor may a man be slain in his sleep. Prisoners are treated as guests, and later

allowed to ride home on their own captured camels, which must, however, be afterwards returned to the captors.<sup>10</sup> These rules are obeyed with the utmost scrupulousness. A Bedouin who dares to transgress the code blackens not only his own name, but the reputation of his whole tribe. With all their roughness and barbarism, the Arabs of Arabia have probably a keener sense of fair play than any other Muslim people, and evince a more sporting and gentlemanly spirit. Just there, no doubt, lies the reason why they have succeeded in attracting and even fascinating so many of the best sort of Englishmen, who, for the sake of studying their customs, have consented to share the rigour of their daily life.

A Christian once said to a Muslim: 'Islam, unlike Christendom, possesses not the love of one's neighbour.' The answer was: 'Islam possesses *ihsan*; and this means actual practice of neighbourly love, whereas the Christian ideal signifies merely a sentiment which one man entertains towards another, inasmuch as he wishes him well. Hence we Muslims have a higher moral ideal than Christendom.' The pious Musalman who hears of men and women dying of starvation in European cities is shocked beyond measure at the apparent want of pity, and becomes further fortified in his conviction about the superiority of his own creed.<sup>11</sup>

The annals of Islam can show striking examples of humanity and magnanimity, which may fairly be set off against the monotonous list of massacres and cruelties wherewith those pages are stained. In the Crusades Islam frequently appeared more Christian in action than the Christians themselves. And the extraordinary mercy and forbearance of Saladin after the victory of Hattin present a vivid contrast with the treachery of the Frankish leaders. The rule of the Moors in Spain produced several instances of a like phenomenon. In the tenth century Cordova was the home of a chivalrous ideal which anticipated the knightly devotion of the medieval Christian warrior. During the days of the Almoravids a notable incident occurred, eloquent of the high standard of honour which prevailed. The Moors laid siege to the fortress of

Azeca, which was defended by the queen of Alfonso VII. She reproached them with attacking a fort commanded by a woman. The besiegers confessed that they were to blame, and agreed to depart if the queen would but show herself from the balcony of her palace. Upon her so doing, they withdrew.<sup>12</sup>

For an illustration of pure sweetness of temper we may turn to nineteenth-century Afghanistan. A certain Mullah, who, owing to his remarkable learning, had begun to attract a following, was declared by the Akhund of Swat to be a heretic. Accordingly an Afridi set out to slay him, but managed only to stab him in the face. When the Mullah's disciples fell upon the would-be assassin, their master restrained them, and after expostulating with the man dismissed him unharmed.<sup>13</sup> Muhammadan festivals, and also the close of the Ramdan fast, are often made an occasion for reconciliation and forgiveness. The parties to a quarrel will at such times recite together the opening chapter of the Qur'an, and then embrace one another.<sup>14</sup>

That month of abstinence, which by reason of the Muhammadan lunar year may occur in the height of the hot weather, shows very forcibly the hold which Islam still maintains over the masses of her people. Ramdan to a Musalman means far more than does Lent to the average Christian. Muhammad, in spite of his general antipathy to ascetic regulations, evidently perceived that a period of fasting might be good for the souls of his followers. It would remind them of the descent of the Qur'an from Heaven, and serve to impress upon them the necessity of complete resignation to the Will of Allah. All through the weary month of Ramdan, from sunrise to sunset, the Muslim must conquer his natural appetite for food and his acquired craving for tobacco. By night he may feed and smoke to his heart's content, since, as the Qur'an remarks (Sura 2.185), Allah desires to make the way easy for him. The more devout among the Muslims endeavour to make Ramdan an occasion for spiritual improvement, and spend much time in the mosques. But the rank and file of believers regard the month rather as a burden, to be endured with whatever grim patience they can muster.



Physical courage has always been counted among the characteristic virtues of Islam. The ordinary Muslim has less fear of death than the Christian. Part of the reason may be that the Muhammadan is less conscious of his own sinfulness. But what makes him die bravely is essentially his view of fate. 'Lex est, non poena, perire'. The feeling that every event, including his own death, has long ago been fixed for an appointed time fortifies his mind in the dark hour, and gives to him a kind of melancholy courage. The soldiers of Khalid, and of later generals, had the additional incentive of the holy war, participation in which afforded an indisputable claim to the privilege of paradise. In the case of Muslims who have died on their beds, little evidence has been recorded to show that in the hour of death the prospect of paradise is sufficiently vivid to console. Only the Sufi can exclaim with Jalal-ud-din : 'From Death I snatch eternal life ; he snatches from me my many-coloured cloak.'

Suicide is extremely rare among Musalmans, and is forbidden by the Qur'an in Sura 4.29. There was at one time an epidemic of attempts at suicide among Egyptian students who failed in their examinations. But mostly the act was only half-hearted, and designed to win pity or publicity.<sup>15</sup> The more subtle form of suicide, which consists in the refusal to fight for life against cholera and similar diseases, is far commoner.

In the matter of temperance the Muslim compares favourably with the inhabitants of many European countries. The ban placed by the Qur'an on wine has been and still is substantially respected on the part of the vast majority of Musalmans. And the many passages in Islamic literature which appear to condone or encourage the drinking of wine should not be construed as evidence of its general prevalence. The Muslim drinker seldom quite manages to stifle his scruples. Busbecq at Constantinople observed a man who, whenever he took the wine-cup in his hand, uttered loud cries, in order to warn his soul to retire to some corner of his body, or quit it altogether, and thus escape defilement.<sup>16</sup> At times the casuistry took a

different turn. It was argued that to drink a single drop of wine incurred the punishment promised by the Qur'an ; and therefore drinking, once begun, might as well be carried to excess. According to Rycaut's account, the Turks found it impossible to drink wine in moderation, or merely by way of medicine. Their lawyers were divided on the interpretation of the Qur'anic prohibition. Although, as noticed above, some used their ingenuity for the purpose of evasion, there were others who pressed the embargo to the uttermost limit. One opinion maintained that if grass grew on a spot where wine had been spilt, and cattle chanced to feed upon the grass, the animals became thereby abominable, and unlawful for food no less than swine.<sup>17</sup> Anti-Christian feeling probably helped to inspire the more violent pronouncements against wine-drinking. Mahdis, and other claimants to prophetic rank, were, as a rule, sworn foes of drinking. Ibn Tumart made a point of smashing every wine-jar and musical instrument that he saw. His point of view was the same as that of the Wahabis, who have done much to strengthen the traditional sentiment in favour of complete abstinence. At the present time, especially in Syria and Egypt, an inordinate consumption of coffee supplies the demand for a stimulant.

The Wahabis, besides, are strongly opposed to the use of tobacco, alleging that the first tobacco-plant was reared by Satan. Under their regime, the sale of this commodity can only be conducted in secret, and the smoker becomes a marked man. But except in regions where the Wahabi influence is sufficiently powerful to render the habit unfashionable, the use of tobacco is almost universal among Muslims, and is not considered to be in any way contrary to religion. Opium is more rarely smoked, although this practice is stated to be quite common in the Dutch East Indies, to which the drug was introduced by the Arabs.<sup>18</sup>

Gambling is denounced by the Qur'an as definitely as the drinking of wine. Yet it appeals with irresistible force to very large numbers of Muhammadans, who would hardly subscribe to the words of the Arabian proverb : 'The gambler has the moonlight for his gains.' The Arabs

of the Persian Gulf are tremendously interested in the breeding and training of race-horses, and on any Indian course Muhammadans will be found swarming around the totalisators and bookmakers. A great many Muslims, too, play cards for money, and gamble in stocks and shares.

Hospitality and courtesy are to be reckoned among the outstanding virtues of Musalmans. Their ideal host is the figure of Hatim Tai, around whom numberless legends have gathered, many of them so extravagant that his liberality is made to appear quixotic. Hence an extremely open-handed Muslim is sometimes termed *hatimi*. The tradition of unbounded hospitality in Arabia goes back far beyond the beginning of Islam. And the customs which regulate the entertainment of a guest are reminiscent of the times of the patriarchs. The host still stands and waits upon his guests, even as Abraham attended the wants of the angels. A man invited by any respectable person to an entertainment may bring with him several of his own friends without permission of the host, who must treat them with the same politeness which he extends to those expressly invited. To what extent all this ritual really betokens love and philanthropy is difficult to decide. One writer remarks that sometimes the very persons who the previous night have been lavishly cared for are overtaken and robbed by their hosts in the morning.<sup>19</sup> But in general the duty of hospitality ranks as an integral part of that code of honour which to the Arab heart is as dear as life itself. 'Reverence the guest, even though he be an infidel', said the Prophet. In Transjordan it is a custom to engrave a coffee-spoon on the grave of a man specially distinguished for his hospitality. And the Moorish host is required by etiquette to say his prayers in the mode favoured by his guest, even though he himself may disapprove of that method.<sup>20</sup>

The most casual visit, particularly in Persia, is made the occasion of flowery flattery. The guest enquires not once, but several times, after his host's health, and even after that of his domestic servants; although convention forbids him to ask about the tenants of the zenana. Both in

speaking and in writing to an equal or superior, the Persian will refer to himself as 'the slave (*banda*),' and to the other as 'majesty' or 'Presence (*hazrat*)'. He is careful to convey the impression that he will be deeply honoured by any commands that his friend may condescend to give, and that he is ready to be his ransom.

Thus time is not reckoned a valuable commodity. The Muslim declines to subject himself to the tyranny of the clock. Nor does he, like the European, make a fetish of efficiency. He does not much believe in subdivision of labour, and considers it best that the whole of an article should be made by the same hand. This old-fashioned idea has at least the advantage of encouraging the manual worker to look upon himself as something of an artist, and so to pursue that ideal of craftsmanship which William Morris was always advocating.

The Musalman has too a fairly keen sense of humour. In the *Maqamat* of Hariri a number of humorous situations are described, as, for example, where a religious teacher, after delivering a sermon against self-indulgence, is discovered feasting upon a roast kid and a jar of wine.<sup>21</sup> Muhammad himself appears to have enjoyed his playful moments, possibly amused at his own mission. And in Africa some popularity has been attained by the ritual of the *zar*, which is a cryptic parody on the darweshes and their *zikk*, devils being invoked instead of Allah.<sup>22</sup> Sometimes Muslim humour expresses itself in a proverb, such as : 'The best of visits is to find the visited one not at home.' The flower-sellers of Damascus advertise their bouquets with the persuasive cry : 'Propitiate your mother-in-law !' Plenty of humour, likewise, may be found in Muslim cartoons and caricatures, whether dealing with international politics or with domestic life. Still, if a sense of proportion be the real foundation of humour, one may begin to suspect the temperament of those who attach such enormous importance to trivial rites and ceremonies.

Nor does the Muslim see anything incongruous in his own inquisitiveness. He delights to pry into his neighbour's affairs, and the vagueness of his distinction between

truth and error places him at the mercy of every chance rumour that circulates in the local bazaar. During the Great War, no doubt, false reports were rife in every country of the world. But those which obtained credit in Muslim circles were beyond measure fantastic. In Sind it was solemnly stated and believed that the Japanese had taken possession of the Baghdad railway. Another tale, taken seriously by educated Egyptians, declared that the Turks were about to capture the Suez Canal and invade Egypt by a curious device. A troop of thirsty camels was to be loaded with kerosene tins containing dry cement. These animals, being conducted to the Canal, would thereupon rush into the water, and the cement would harden into a pavement for the feet of the Turkish soldiers.<sup>23</sup> But rumour is no less busy among Musalmans in times of peace. In India the simplest act of a Government official is assumed to be other than it appears, and all kinds of reasons and motives are invented or assigned.

The love of nature and natural scenery is not among the strong points of Islamic character and literature. Yet exceptions may be found. The Emperor Babar, in the midst of a crisis, could notice and admire the autumn tints of an apple-tree.<sup>24</sup> And Ibn 'Arabi was not blind to the beauty of a rural scene.<sup>25</sup> But to judge from literature the Muslims have found little in nature that is theirs. Nature does not lead them upward, as it led Job or the Psalmist. Nor does it awaken in the Muslim breast the sensuous delight experienced and expressed by Shelley or Wordsworth. One pictures with difficulty the heart of a Musalman leaping up at the sight of a rainbow in the sky. The same dread of idolatry which restrained and injured the art of painting cuts off the Muslim from the entire sphere of natural, as contrasted with revealed, religion. 'Abusus non tollit usum' is a maxim which he generally fails to apply.

Muhammadans are, for the most part, considerate towards the lower animals. They do not, indeed, exhibit the excessive reverence of the Buddhist for all forms of animal-life. Nor do they deem it necessary, like Hindus, to provide hospitals for aged cows. In the Qur'an (5.103)

the Arabs are rebuked for regarding certain animals as sacred. For it appears that they used to dedicate to idols certain camels and goats, which they distinguished by a special mark, allowing them to roam at liberty in search of pasturage. On the other hand, the Qur'an, like the Bible, has remarkably little to say concerning man's duty to the beasts. Common humanity, reinforced by the motives of self-interest, has prompted the Musalman to make good the omission. In the famous romance of Ibn Tufail, the philosopher Hai, debating what he may lawfully eat, decides that he ought to abstain from the flesh of animals, lest he should interfere in the attainment of that perfection to which they are destined by the Creator. If compelled to eat meat, Hai will choose the animal that is commonest, so as to affect as little as possible the preservation of the species.<sup>26</sup>

The camel has always been looked upon with mingled feelings of awe and affection. "How great the gain which the feet of the camels bring to men!" So runs an Arabian adage. And the neglect of camels is counted among the signs that shall herald the Day of Judgment. The camel not only performs the common work of transport, but is closely associated with pilgrimages to shrines, and other holy functions. With equal nonchalance these stoical creatures carry the covering for the Black Stone from Cairo to Mecca, or in 'caravans of the dead' traverse the Persian waste, with their burden of corpses, bound for the select cemetery of Qum. The camel is long-suffering, and the resigned indifference, slightly supercilious and sullen, with which he seems to view the world, commends him to the faithful.

Rycaut tells of Turks anointing their beards with foam from the camel's mouth.<sup>27</sup> Moorish camel-men urge on their mounts by song. In India the driver incites his camel by ejaculating: 'O faithless one!' The Persian cameleer prefers the national expletive, 'Son of a burnt father!' These less polite expressions alternate with the exaggerated language of endearment.

It is not always sentiment that governs the relations between man and camel. In 1848, during the campaign of

Sir Charles Napier, the Sind Camel Corps was expected to march fifty miles a day, and we are told that this was done by making the animals drunk with *bhang*. Muhammad would have shuddered at the thought of such a method.

On the pilgrimage to Mecca, camels which become disabled are either sold cheap to the Bedouin, or promptly slaughtered.<sup>28</sup> The Moors of Tripoli would, in case of necessity, rip open a camel for the sake of obtaining water.<sup>29</sup> Sindhi Muhammadans leave a decrepit camel to die a lingering death in the tamarisk jungle, surrounded by his favourite food, which he has not sufficient strength to reach. Truly a sorry ending to a life spent in man's service.

The Arab's devotion to his horses has passed into a proverb, and the extreme docility of Arab ponies testifies to careful and patient training. In the Bedouin camp these animals are counted almost as members of the family, and may often be observed nuzzling their masters. Arabia hardly contains an evil-tempered horse.

The Turks likewise are kind to horses. In Busbecq's time they trained them to kneel down and to pick up a stick or a sword in their teeth from the ground and give it to the rider.<sup>30</sup> But then, as now, the bits were faulty and ill-fitting. The veteran horses of the Sultan spent a peaceful old age in the royal stables. There, perchance, they received more individual attention than the Khan's horses at Khelat, where a single groom is assigned to as many as eight or nine stalls. It may be added that the Sindhis, to avoid the trouble of rising in the saddle at a trot, teach their ponies to move at a very fast amble, by which their legs are prematurely outworn.

There are several *hadith* which testify to the Muhammadans' care for their animals. The clipping of horses' manes and forelocks is forbidden. Riders who wish to transact business are enjoined to dismount, and not use the backs of their beasts as pulpits. On the other hand, the authority of the Prophet allows two men to bestride a single donkey.<sup>31</sup>

The reverence accorded to birds was inherited by the Muslims from the ancient Arabs, who rivalled the Roman augurs in the art of deducing future events from signs

given by fowls of the air. Nor is it a mere coincidence that the word *tair* signifies both bird and fate. 'We have fastened every man's bird (fortune) about his neck' says the Qur'an, even as the albatross was hung from the neck of the Ancient Mariner.<sup>32</sup> Solomon, who knew the language of birds, counted them as part of his army, and obtained news about the Queen of Sheba from a hoopoe.<sup>33</sup>

Muhammad himself appears to have had some feeling for birds, and on a certain occasion, it is said, reproved one of his followers for robbing a redbreast of her young.<sup>34</sup> The Turks have shown themselves, as a people, especially indignant at any maltreatment of animals. An instance from the sixteenth century is on record, in which a Venetian goldsmith, residing at Constantinople, tortured a bird, and in consequence was severely handled by an angry crowd. We are also told that the inhabitants of that city used to tame and feed kites, whom they regarded as the natural scavengers of their streets.<sup>35</sup> It was likewise counted an act of piety to ransom a bird from the cage, and restore it to liberty.<sup>36</sup>

But the normal affection of Muslims for birds does not override their passion for sport. Cock-fighting remains a popular pastime in certain parts of India. A crowd of Sindhi cultivators keenly enjoys the sight of two male partridges pitted against each other for the prize of the caged female. Another favourite form of entertainment consists in setting a scorpion to battle against a tarantula.

In the estimation of the Musalman, cats rank far above dogs. The Prophet prescribed that cats should be well treated, since they protected the tents of the Arabs from snakes. In Tunis these animals are thought to have souls, and to be true Musalmans, facing Mecca when they perform their ablutions.<sup>37</sup>

When engaged on the Haj, the Muslim must avoid all shedding of blood. This prohibition, with a thoroughness worthy of the Jains, includes in its scope the destruction of flies and vermin. But casuistry is equal to the occasion. The killing of vermin in Mecca is often defended on the ground that the insect slain was of foreign extraction, and therefore not entitled to immunity.<sup>38</sup>



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### INTRODUCTION

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